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THE RISING NEPAL

ALL BE HAPPY, ALL BE WELL

PHOTO: RSS

Prime Minister Balandra Shah discussing contemporary educational issues with vice-chancellors of various universities and academies at Singha Durbar, Kathmandu on Monday.

PM calls to remove political outfits from universities

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 20

Prime Minister Balendra Shah has instructed vice-chancellors to immediately implement the decision to dismantle all party-affiliated student and staff organisational structures in universities and health educational institutions.

During a three-and-a-half-hour meeting held on Monday at the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers with vice-chancellors from universities and academies across the country, the Prime Minister issued the directive.

Taking a firm stance that politics should not be practised in educational institutions on any pretext, Prime Minister Shah clarified that no existing law would hinder the removal of such partisan structures.

The PM said that institutions such as hospitals, campuses and schools are sacred spaces where no political party's flag, influence or organisation would be allowed.

He further suggested that those wishing to engage in politics should step away from their professional responsibilities and commit fully to political activities.

During the discussion, Prof. Dr. Dhaneshwar Nepal, Vice-Chancellor of Nepal Sanskrit University, raised security concerns, stating that attempts to remove student organisations had led to threats and attacks.

In response, Prime Minister Shah directed that any security issues arising from the removal of political structures be immediately reported to the concerned ministry or his secretariat.

He assured that the government is committed to providing all necessary support, including through security agencies, and urged vice-chancellors to carry out their responsibilities with confidence, noting that the police administration would fulfil its duties.

The Prime Minister also issued strict instructions to fully adhere to the academic calendar and to publish examination results within one month.

Similarly, Minister for Education, Science and Technology Sasmit Pokharel stated that the ministry has already directed the abolition of politically affiliated organisational structures, and reiterated that no law prevents their implementation.

During the meeting, Prof. Dr. Deepak Aryal, Vice-Chancellor of Tribhuvan University, informed that following the Gen Z movement and elections, student and staff organisations have gradually become inactive.

Vice-Chancellors Prof. Dr. Dhruba Kumar Gautam of Madhya Pashimanchal University, Prof. Dr. Bijukumar Thapaliya of Purbanchal University, and Prof. Dr. Hemraj Panta of Sudurpaschim University stated that political tensions persist in some constituent campuses.

Other vice-chancellors, however, expressed the view that political activities in their institutions are minimal and that stricter administration could effectively end politics in the academic sector.

RSP EXPANDS SECRETARIAT

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 20

The central committee meeting of the ruling party, Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) has decided to expand its organisational structure by appointing new members to both the Central Advisor Council and the Federal Leadership Council.

The central committee meeting of the party beginning in Kathmandu from Monday took the decision to this effect.

According to the party spokesperson, Manish Jha, Tulsi Prasad Chaudhary, Ram Singh Tharu, Jivan Thami, Hari Sharan Acharya, Prema Chaudhary, Nawaraj Rana, Rajendra Bahadur Adhikarii and Eak Raj Chaudhary have been nominated to the Federal Leadership Council.

Similarly, the party has inducted new members into the Central Advisory Council. Those appointed include Jivan Prabha Lama, Moti Prasad Pangali, Hari Prasad Pandey and Bishnu Hari Sharma.

Likewise, the party has decided to nominate Bhupadev Shah, a confidant of Prime Minister Balen Shah, as the party's general secretary.

Additionally, Sagar Dhakal and Sarita Shree Gyawali have been nominated as secretariat members. Their names were proposed by the party president and subsequently endorsed by the central committee.

The meeting also approved revisions to the party's levy as proposed earlier by the secretariat meeting.

The party has fixed monthly contributions for key public representatives and officials. Members of Parliament will pay Rs. 15,000, ministers Rs. 18,000 and personal secretaries Rs. 2,000.

Resource crunch cripples postal service amid new revival plan

BY SASHIDHAR PARAJULI
Biratnagar, Apr. 20

The government has decided to activate post offices to bring public services closer to citizens' doorsteps. Under this plan, important official documents such as citizenship certificates, passports, driving licenses, and national identity cards will be delivered to homes through the postal system. However, given the current condition of post offices—strained by a lack of resources, infrastructure, and manpower—the immediate effectiveness of this initiative appears uncertain.

At the Postal Directorate in Biratnagar, no official directive or communication has yet been received regarding the delivery of such government documents. The office is still operating with traditional letter services and limited parcel delivery. Although there have been efforts to modernise the postal system in line with technological advancements, progress has been slow due to inadequate infrastructure.

The directorate has arrangements to send parcels to 27 countries worldwide, but services are currently active in only 20 countries. Ongoing conflicts and wars in some Western nations have halted services to seven countries. Due to inefficiency, the office receives only four to five international parcels per month, resulting in minimal revenue. District and local-level post offices are not authorised to accept parcels for international delivery.

Deteriorating condition and delivery delays

The Biratnagar Postal Directorate receives an average of 2,000 letters per month from both government and private sectors. A similar number of letters arrive from other regions for distribution within Morang and Biratnagar. To handle this workload, the office has only 35 staff members, including nine postmen—most of whom are employed on a contract basis. They lack government-provided vehicles for delivery.

Some staff deliver letters on foot, while others use their personal motorcycles to reach neighborhoods. Due to the lack of transportation and fuel, it often takes weeks for letters to reach their intended recipients. The post box service, once widely used, is now nearly defunct. Although it still has 164 regular users, it is no longer functioning effectively.

Postal offices operate across all 14 districts and 137 local units in Koshi Province, with a minimum of three staff members at each local office. Despite heavy workloads, services remain slow due to a lack of basic facilities and technology. Some local post offices do not even have the means to deliver letters. Although efforts are made to distribute mail on the same day it is received, delays persist.

For instance, a letter sent from Kathmandu takes at least a week to reach the recipient in Biratnagar. After dispatch from Kathmandu, mail is routed to Chitwan, from where it is transported to the directorate three times a week. The following day, postmen collect and deliver it. While motorcycles are essential for timely delivery, only a few staff have access to them. Five motorcycles were destroyed during the Gen Z movement, and only three have since been replaced—these are mostly used for inter-municipality duties, further delaying local delivery.

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'I will abide by party decisions and cooperate fully in probe'

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 20

Minister for Home Affairs Sudan Gurung, who has been facing allegations of concealing investment in his asset declaration and maintaining links with controversial business groups, has denied accusations against him.

Amid mounting criticism and calls for a high-level investigation, Minister Gurung issued a lengthy clarification via social media on Monday, claiming that he has not hidden any assets and that all his investments were made through the formal banking system.

He described the allegations against him as 'selective interpretation' and political propaganda.

Responding to claims that he failed to disclose 25,000 shares (worth Rs. 2.5 million) in Star Micro Insurance and Liberty Micro Life Insurance in his asset declaration, he defended his position.

"I have clearly declared over Rs. 20 million in investments in securities traded in the stock market, which can be verified on the Council of Ministers' website," Gurung said. "The investments in those two companies are included within the same category. This is not concealment; it is merely a matter of classification. Anyone intending to hide assets would not openly declare over Rs. 20 million."

He also rejected allegations that he purchased shares using unexplained funds before becoming a minister, asserting that investing in the stock market is not a crime and that the source of funds was a loan.

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Karnali grapples with high maternal, child mortality

PHOTO: RAJANI YOGI

Provincial Hospital in Surkhet.

BY RAJANI YOGI
Surkhet, Apr. 20

Bhawana Bista, 27, of Narharinath Rural Municipality–8 in Kalikot, died during treatment. She had undergone a caesarean delivery at the Provincial Hospital, Surkhet, on April 13.

Although the first operation was successful, her condition became critical following a second surgery performed on April 15 after blood clotting complications were detected.

As her condition deteriorated, her family spent approximately Rs 860,000 to airlift her to Kathmandu.

She was flown to the capital by a chartered helicopter with medical personnel on April 17. However, doctors at Mediciti Hospital declared her dead shortly after arrival.

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Snow blankets Bhairavkunda, drawing more visitors

BY CHITRA KUMAR MIJAR
Sindhupalchok, Apr. 20

PHOTO: TRN

Snow-covered Bhairavkunda in Bhotekoshi Rural Municipality-1.

Fresh snowfall has turned Bhairavkunda, a high-altitude lake in Bhotekoshi Rural Municipality, into a striking white landscape, attracting a growing number of visitors.

The renowned lake, located in the upper reaches of Sindhupalchok District, has been covered in thick snow after several years, giving it the appearance of shimmering silver. As a result, both domestic and foreign tourists have begun flocking to the area.

Situated at an altitude of 4,124 metres above sea level, Bhairavkunda spans around 84,193 square metres. Above the lake lies Furbi Ghyachu Pass at 6,567 metres. The lake and surrounding pass offer stunning views. The area is home to the Sherpa community, who worship the lake as "Ama Chhyumen" in their language. Bhairavkunda holds religious significance for both Hindu and Buddhist devotees.

According to the Survey Department, the depth of the lake has not yet been measured. Water flowing from the lake forms the nearby Bhairavkunda Waterfall, the second-highest waterfall in the country at 198 metres, adding to the area's beauty.

The lake, waterfall and mountain pass together create a captivating destination. The Jugal mountain range can be seen directly from Bhairavkunda, enhancing its scenic appeal.

Raju Lama, ward chairperson of Bhotekoshi Rural Municipality-1, said that during snowfall, more than 100 domestic and international tourists visit the site daily.

Bhairavkunda lies about 109 kilometres from Kathmandu along the Araniko Highway. From Larcha near the Tatopani border point, it takes about an hour by vehicle to reach a monastery, followed by a one-and-a-half to two-day trek to the lake. Local hotels and homestays are available for overnight stays. The site sees particularly large crowds during Janai Purnima.

Historically, in 1854 BS, during the Nepal-Tibet war, Jung Bahadur Rana built Duguna Gadhi fort below Bhairavkunda, which was used in military operations. The area also offers views towards Khasa in Tibet.

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BULLION
(Rs. per tola)

Hallmark Gold : Rs. 299,700/-
Worked Gold : NA
Silver : Rs. 5,190/-

STOCK

NEPSE : 2,825.23

Total Amount : 5,434,240,276.3

No. of Share : 11,653,370

110 MW DUDHKOSHI-5 HYDEL PROJECT TO BE DEVELOPED

RSS
Kathmandu, Apr 20

The Dudhkoshi Hydropower Project-5 with a capacity of 110 megawatts is to be built in Dudhkoshi river in Solukhumbu district.

As proposed by the developer, the project would be located at wards no. 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 in Mapya Dudhkoshi Rural Municipality.

The Electricity Development Department has already granted approval to the developer, Independent Power Company Nepal, to make this the semi-reservoir-based project.

The environmental impact assessment report of the project for the run-of-the-river project was already completed but the supplementary report on environmental impact assessment for the semi-reservoir based project is also being prepared, it is said.

For the project advancement, more than 2,450 trees from a community forest should be cleared.

Once completed, the power generated from the project would be connected to the New Khimti Substation at Devitar, Dolakha.

The total cost of the project is estimated to be more than Rs 19 billion and would be completed in five years, the developer said.

RAT POISON FOUND IN SOME BABY FOOD JARS

AP
Vienna, Apr. 20

Countries across Central Europe pulled baby food off the shelves Monday after rat poison was discovered in some jars of the HiPP brand over the weekend.

Austria 's health minister told parents, kindergartens and day care centers to use utmost caution when feeding young children HiPP. The company recalled some of its baby food jars because samples there as well as in Slovakia and the Czech Republic tested positive for rat poison.

Authorities believe tampering occurred in 190-gram (6.7-ounce) jars of baby food made with carrots and potatoes for 5-month-old children that were sold at SPAR supermarkets in Austria. The first sample tested positive on Saturday.

On Monday, Austrian authorities said they were searching for a second jar of baby food that may have poison. It may have been sold at a Spar supermarket in the eastern town of Eisenstadt, Austrian news agency APA reported.

PHOTO: SANTOSH GAUTAM/RSS

Lovely Hill, located in Beni Municipality–2, and Beni Bazaar, district headquarters of Myagdi. Lovely Hill has developed as a new tourist destination from where visitors can observe scenic views of Beni Bazaar, the winding Kali Gandaki River and Dhaulagiri mountain.

ICT Foundation incubates over 50 startups

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 20

The Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) under the Nepal government has selected ICT Foundation Nepal (IFN) to implement the Business Incubation Service (BIS) Operation and Management Programme.

IFN will run the Digital and IT-enabled Startup Incubation Programme to support more than 50 early-stage startups based in Kathmandu Valley (Bagmati Province) and Itahari (Koshi Province). The programme, which will run from March to June 2026, will be conducted in a hybrid model.

Those participating in startups will receive one-to-one mentorship from experts, with capacity building, business development and validation support, according to a press statement of IFN.

This incubation initiative aims to expand entrepreneurship development beyond Kathmandu. The programme seeks to strengthen the regional innovation ecosystem by including entrepreneurs from historically underserved areas. Selected startups will get direct access to industry experts, practical training, and networking opportunities.

This is expected to help them refine their business models, strengthen their market presence, and prepare for investment.

Additionally, top-performing startups will receive seed investment support and gain access to national-level platforms such as ICT Award, Startup and Idea Fest, National Conclaves, and AI Conference. ICT Foundation Nepal has previously contributed to promoting regional innovation through initiatives like Digital Karnali Conclave and Digital Madhes Conclave.

Through this programme, IFN aims to strengthen Nepal's startup ecosystem, promote inclusive and regional entrepreneurship, support innovation-driven economic growth, and create pathways for startups to scale nationally and internationally.

The deadline of the registration is till 11:59 PM, April 23, 2026.

Oil prices jump and Wall Street slides

AP
New York, Apr. 20

Oil prices climbed more than 5% and Wall Street veered toward losses before the opening bell Monday as a standoff between Iran and the U.S. prevented tankers from using the Strait of Hormuz.

Futures for the S&P 500 also fell 0.5% while futures for the Dow Jones Industrial Average slid 0.6%. Nasdaq futures also were off by 0.5%.

The Persian Gulf's Strait of Hormuz — a passageway for 20% of the world's oil — was closed again after Iran reversed a decision to reopen the strait and President Donald Trump said a U.S. Navy blockade of Iranian ports remains in effect.

U.S. benchmark crude gained $5.18, or 6.3%, to $87.88 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, gained 5.3% at $95.20 a barrel.

President Donald Trump said Sunday that the U.S. had seized an Iranian-flagged cargo ship that tried to get around a naval blockade. Iran's joint military command said Tehran would respond soon and called the U.S. seizure an act of piracy.

A fragile, two-week ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran is set to expire Wednesday, while escalating tensions in the Strait of Hormuz fueled pessimism over new talks to end the war.

Since the war began, market sentiment has swung wildly. A strong start to the earnings reporting season for big U.S. companies has helped support stocks.

"The problem for markets is not the absence of hope; it is the overpricing of it," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary. "The latest move higher in equities has started to feel less like conviction and more like momentum feeding on itself."

In equities trading early Monday, building insulation maker and distributor TopBuild jumped nearly 19% on news that it was being acquired by building materials company QXO for $17 billion, according to media reports. QXO shares dipped more than 4%.

Airline stocks tumbled again, as they tend to when oil prices jump. American and Delta both fell 2.6% while United fell 3.2%. United may have taken the bigger hit after American shot down the notion of merger with its rival, which was reportedly floated by United's CEO last week at the White House.

On Friday, oil prices had dropped back to where they were in the early days of the Iran war, and U.S. stocks raced to a fresh record after Iran said the strait was open again for commercial tankers carrying crude from the Persian Gulf to customers worldwide.

A freer flow of oil could relieve pressure on prices for gasoline and all kinds of other products that get moved by vehicles. It could even ultimately help people pay less on credit-card interest and mortgage bills.

At midday in Europe, Germany's DAX lost 1.4% and the CAC 40 in Paris shed 1.1%. Britain's FTSE 100 fell 0.7%.

Despite renewed doubts about how soon ships will again transport the vast amounts oil the world gets from the Middle East, share prices were mostly higher in Asia., though they gave up the bigger gains of earlier in the session.

In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 rose 0.6% to 58,824.89, while South Korea's Kospi picked up 0.4% to 6,219.09.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 0.8% to 26,361.07 and the Shanghai Composite index advanced 0.8% to 4,0802.13.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 edged 0.1% higher to 8,953.30.

In Taiwan, the Taiex jumped 0.4%. India's Sensex rose 0.1% and the SET in Bangkok lost 0.2%.

Trade deficit widens to Rs. 1,267 billion in nine months

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 20

The country's trade deficit swelled to Rs. 1,267 billion during the first nine months of the current fiscal year, driven by a significantly higher volume of imports than exports.

According to trade statistics for the first nine months published by the Department of Customs on Monday, the trade deficit surged by 13.04 per cent to reach Rs. 1,267.56 billion by mid-April of the current fiscal year.

In the first nine months of the previous fiscal year 2024/25, Nepal recorded a trade deficit of Rs. 1,121.33 billion.

A lower volume of exports compared to rising imports led to the widening trade deficit during the review period. Imports increased by 13.82 per cent to Rs. 1,490.49 billion during the review period, contributing to the higher trade deficit.

In the same period of the last fiscal year, the country had imported goods worth Rs. 1,309.53 billion. Although exports also increased by 18.46 per cent to Rs. 222.93 billion during the first nine months (mid-July 2025 to mid-April 2026) of the current fiscal year, the trade deficit widened due to the comparatively lower volume of exports.

Nepal had exported goods worth Rs. 188.19 billion during the same period last fiscal year. According to the statistics, total foreign trade has also increased.

The country's foreign trade reached Rs. 1,713.43 billion during the review period, which is 14.40 per cent higher than the previous year.

Despite the growth in exports, their contribution to total trade remained only 13.01 per cent during the review period, while imports

accounted for 86.99 per cent. However, the share of export in total foreign trade grew by 3.55 per cent while the share of import dropped by 0.51 per cent during the review period.

The export-to-import ratio currently stands at 1:6.69, compared to 1:6.96 in the same period last fiscal year.

The growth in exports was largely driven by higher shipments of soybean oil, carpets, garments, tea, and coffee.

The country exported soybean oil worth Rs. 90.71 billion during the first nine months of the current fiscal year. Soybean oil alone accounts for almost 41 per cent of total exports during the period. Similarly, sunflower oil worth Rs. 6.94 billion and palm oil worth Rs. 5.95 billion were exported during the review period.

Other major export items, included carpets worth Rs. 8.55 billion, tea and coffee worth Rs. 3 billion, cardamom worth Rs. 10.70 billion, and dog chews worth Rs. 3.23 billion.

On the import side, petroleum products worth Rs. 212 billion were imported during the first nine months of the current fiscal year.

This includes diesel worth Rs. 103.31 billion, petrol worth Rs. 50.39 billion, aviation fuel worth Rs. 16.02 billion, kerosene worth Rs. 605 million, and liquefied petroleum gas worth Rs. 41.64 billion.

Nepal also imported significant volumes of edible oil raw materials, including crude soybean oil. The country imported crude soybean oil worth Rs. 96.72 billion, crude palm oil worth Rs. 9.61 billion, and sunflower oil worth Rs. 14.59 billion during the review period.

Likewise, food imports remained substantial, with paddy and rice imports totaling Rs. 32.51 billion and maize imports reaching Rs. 10 billion during the first nine months of the current fiscal year.

Cooperative raises milk purchase price

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Barahakshetra, Apr. 20

A milk producers' cooperative located in Prakashpur, Ward No. 10 of Barahakshetra in Sunsari, has increased the purchase price of milk.

According to the cooperative, it has raised the price at which it buys milk from farmers.

The purchase price has been increased based on the fat and solid-not-fat (SNF) content in cow and buffalo milk.

The cooperative's chairman, Humar Jung Basnet said that farmers have been charged an increase of Rs. 1.9 per litre per fat based on the fat and SNF content in cow and buffalo milk.

According to him, the cooperative, which has been purchasing milk at Rs. 7 and Rs. 4 per SNF, has increased the price of fat by Rs. 0.10 and SNF by Rs. 0.15, effective from April 29, 2026.

Basnet said, "Due to the recent rise in milk production costs, we have added some amount to fat and SNF to provide at least a little relief to farmers."

A recent meeting of the board of directors of Prakashpur Milk Producer's Cooperative decided to increase the purchase price for both shareholder members and non-member farmers who supply milk to the institution.

He said that this increase would help reduce the burden of rising production costs.

Accountant of the cooperative Jagat Bahadur Karki said that the prices of cattle feed have been increasing, which raises milk production costs, so the cooperative has increased the price to provide some relief to farmers.

Based on the fat and SNF content, farmers supplying milk to the cooperative have been receiving more than Rs. 100 per litre at maximum.

The cooperative has 500 shareholder members from Wards 8, 9, 10, and 11 of Barahakshetra Municipality.

The milk collected from farmers is sold to four different dairies and cooperatives both within and outside the district.

Sikta Project covers only 24,000 hectares of lands

BY SIRAJ KHAN
Nepalgunj, Apr. 20

The construction of the Sikta Irrigation Project, a national pride project under construction in Banke, has achieved irrigation coverage over 24,000 hectares of land despite taking nearly two decades and spending close to Rs. 24 billion.

According to the project director, Raju Acharya, the total expenditure since the project's inception has reached Rs. 23.77 billion. With this investment, irrigation facilities from this project have been provided to 24,766 hectares of land in the district so far.

He said that the project, which was operated by constructing a dam on the Rapti River at Agaiya in Rapti Sonari Rural Municipality–2 of Banke, aims to provide irrigation to 42,766 hectares of land. As of the mid-April of the current fiscal year 2025/26, irrigation facilities have been directly provided only to 24,766 hectares of land.

According to the project's Information Officer and Senior Divisional Engineer, Manoj Kumar Sah, construction is currently underway with a revised master plan estimating a total cost of Rs. 52.64 billion, with completion targeted for the fiscal year 2032/33. Although two

PHOTO: TRN

Sikta Irrigation Project, a national pride project under construction in Banke.

decades have passed since the project began, only 46 per cent physical progress has been achieved so far.

He said that it has become easier for farmers to cultivate their crops with irrigation facilities reaching over 24,000 hectares, which are dependent only on rainwater. One of the reasons for the delay in the construction of the project is the failure to receive the sufficient budget, he said.

For the current fiscal year, a budget of Rs. 3.30 billion was proposed as per the approved master plan, but less than half—only Rs. 1.57 billion—was received, according to Acharya. He added that by mid-April, 2026 of current fiscal year, Rs. 857.79 million had been spent.

During the review period of the current fiscal year, the project has achieved 76.31 per cent physical progress and 54.48 per cent financial progress. Local farmers and civil society leaders have stressed the need for adequate and timely budget allocation, along with the removal of other obstacles, to accelerate construction.

Krishna Prasad Shrestha, coordinator of the Citizens Concern Forum Banke, emphasised that timely funding and support are essential for completing national projects like Sikta Irrigation on schedule.

According to the project, water distribution is managed through two main canals—western and eastern canals—with irrigation provided via branch canals.

Wildlife rescue centre opens in Parsa National Park

BY RAMMANI DAHAL
Makwanpur, Apr. 20

After prolonged efforts, a wildlife rescue centre has been established and brought into operation in Parsa National Park.

With the growing human-wildlife conflict in and around the park, there had long been a compulsion to rely on Chitwan National Park for wildlife rescue operations.

The newly established centre marks the first such facility in the area aimed at preventing human casualties.

The rescue centre was inaugurated on Sunday by Mayor Rajan Paudel of Jeetpur Simara Sub-Metropolitan City during a programme organised at the Amlekhgunj Hattisar premises in ward- 21, as part of Wildlife Week 2026.

The centre has been brought into operation through collaboration between the National Trust for Nature Conservation and Parsa National Park.

It is designed for the rescue, treatment and rehabilitation of injured, endangered and problem-causing wildlife.

Speaking at the inauguration, Mayor Paudel said that incidents involving tigers and elephants frequently create problems in the park area, leading to human–wildlife conflict.

He informed that efforts have been ongoing to reduce such conflict and prevent human casualties.

He also acknowledged public complaints regarding delays in rescue operations, particularly in tiger attack cases, and concerns raised over the inefficiency of the concerned authorities.

He expressed confidence that the establishment of the rescue centre would enable timely intervention.

PHOTO : RAMMANI DAHAL

Inauguration of the wildlife rescue centre established at the Amlekhganj Hattisar premises

Mayor Paudel further stated that the centre would also contribute to the development of eco-tourism in the region.

Senior Conservation Officer Ramchandra Khatiwada said that with the operation of the rescue centre, dependence on technical teams from Chitwan National Park has ended.

Previously, rescue operations were often delayed by up to three hours while awaiting teams from Chitwan.

He explained that immediate rescue responses will now be possible, which will help reduce conflict and minimise losses of both humans and wildlife in the buffer zones of Bara, Parsa and Makwanpur districts.

Khatiwada noted that the centre had long been necessary, as reliance on facilities in Sauraha caused delays. Such delays often resulted in retaliatory killings of animals and increased human casualties.

He added that in some cases, tigers had been killed outside protected areas due to human retaliation. Stressing that legal measures alone are insufficient, he highlighted ongoing awareness initiatives such as the "Bagh Mitra" programme to address the issue in the long term.

The centre has been equipped with dart technicians, necessary equipment, medicines and a wildlife ambulance.

It also includes a dart gun set for tranquilising animals such as tigers, white cloth barriers used for containment, snake rescue equipment, camera traps, and tools used for capturing crocodiles.

Raskot inaugurates area administration office

BY PREM RAJ SIMKHADA
Kalikot, Apr. 20

An Area Administration Office has been formally inaugurated in Raskot of Kalikot district following its establishment to provide public services locally.

The office has been set up in Raskot to serve residents of Raskot Municipality, Sanni Triveni, Pachaljharana, Palata and Narharinath Rural Municipalities under Provincial Constituency 'Kha'.

The office began operations after the Ministry of Finance approved budgetary resources on August 21 last year.

The office was officially inaugurated at a ceremony chaired by Chief District Officer Gokarna Raj Suyal, with House of Representatives member Mahendra Bahadur Shahi attending as chief guest.

Speaking at the event, lawmaker Shahi, who is also a former Chief Minister of Karnali Province, said the office had been established after considerable effort and hardship.

He said local residents would no longer need to travel to the district headquarters, Manma, to access government services.

District Coordination Committee Chief Dhanjit Shahi said the office would make it easier for citizens from the former 17 Village Development Committees to obtain public services, describing it as a success for the government.

Due to Kalikot's difficult geography, residents of the Raskot area had long faced challenges travelling to Manma for citizenship certificates and other services. Former UML district vice-chairman Dayaram Simkhada said the government had responded to public grievances by ensuring resources for the office, which has now been formally inaugurated.

The office was officially inaugurated at a ceremony chaired by Chief District Officer Gokarna Raj Suyal, with House of Representatives member Mahendra Bahadur Shahi attending as chief guest.

He said the office had originally been approved during the government led by former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli. According to him, the long-standing demand of residents living across the Karnali River has now been fulfilled. He added that citizens would save at least three days of travel time and around Rs. 3,000 previously spent simply to obtain citizenship documents.

Simkhada also said efforts to make Raskot a centre for education, healthcare, tourism promotion and government services were gradually succeeding. He stated that around 70,000 residents who previously had to travel to the district headquarters would now benefit from easier access to services.

However, Narharinath Rural Municipality Chair Nagendra Bahadur Bista said the new office would be inconvenient for residents of Narharinath, as Raskot lies in the opposite direction. He said Manma would remain a more practical option for them despite Raskot being accessible for other local units under Constituency 'Kha'.

Saptari man missing in Dubai for five months

BY SUDHA DEO
Bhardaha, Saptari, Apr. 20

A man from Saptari district who had travelled to Dubai for foreign employment has been out of contact for the past five months, leaving his family in distress.

Dev Narayan Ram, 41, of Sirkajhari of Shambhunath Municipality-4, went to Dubai for work in 2022. According to his family, he has remained unreachable since mid-November.

Ram had travelled to Dubai in mid-April 2022 through Support Manpower and had been employed in a cleaning job at Dubai Airport.

His wife, Nilam Ram, said he had been scheduled to return to Nepal on leave on November 20, 2024, but he has not returned. She said her husband's passport had been retained at the airport. After losing access to the passport, he had reportedly continued working at the same airport.

"He informed us that he was going to collect his passport on November 20, 2025. Since then, we have had no contact with him," she said.

Nilam added that the family had been surviving on the money sent home by her husband, but they are now struggling to meet daily expenses. His disappearance has caused growing anxiety within the household.

The couple have two children, a seven-year-old daughter and a five-year-old son. Nilam said she has been forced to work as a house help to support the family.

Maya Ram Mochi, Ram's brother-in-law, has filed an application with the Consular and Legal Counselling Section under the Department of Consular Services at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kathmandu, seeking assistance to locate him and bring him back to Nepal.

Nilam said that despite submitting the application on December 8, 2025, the concerned office had shown no interest in the case. She appealed to both the government and the relevant authorities to help determine her husband's whereabouts and facilitate his safe return.

Bagmati Province building damaged in Gen Z protest reconstructed

BY RAMMANI DAHAL
Makwanpur, Apr. 20

Buildings of the Bagmati Province government that were damaged by arson and vandalism during the Gen Z protest last year in September have been repaired, reconstructed and brought back into operation.

Chief Minister of Bagmati Province, Indra Bahadur Baniya, formally handed over the restored buildings on Monday during an inauguration programme marking the completion of large-scale repair and reconstruction works on the damaged physical structures.

The buildings were repaired, maintained and reconstructed by the Urban Development and Building Office, Makwanpur, before being handed over to the respective ministries.

According to officials, the office invited tenders and carried out restoration work on five buildings, including the structure housing five provincial ministries at Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City-1, the Provincial Assembly Secretariat, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation, and the residence of the Chief Secretary.

Speaking at the handover ceremony, Chief Minister Baniya said the provincial government had been working in a transparent and accountable manner towards the public. He said the government had been compelled to operate under difficult circumstances after the ministries and other provincial offices were damaged by arson and vandalism, but the completion of repairs has now paved the way for normal operations to resume.

"The process of shifting ministries back to their original buildings has begun after reconstruction and damage management," he said, adding that Bagmati Province had become the first among all seven provinces to complete reconstruction of government buildings damaged during the Gen Z protest.

He said that the large-scale damage to physical infrastructure had forced offices to function in temporary conditions for a long time, but with the repair works now completed, government efficiency and service delivery would improve.

Describing the losses during the protest as unimaginable, he said the province was also moving forward with plans to build permanent administrative structures and work would begin soon.

Minister for Physical Infrastructure Development Dr. Dinesh Chandra Devkota said structural safety had been given top priority during the repair and reconstruction process. As the fires had weakened the buildings, studies were conducted by teams of experts and structural engineers before the works began, he added.

Secretary at the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure Development Ishwar Chandra Marhattha said Bagmati Province had suffered losses exceeding Rs. 1 billion during the protest, adding that despite the difficult circumstances, all works were carried out through competitive bidding in accordance with the Public Procurement Act.

Chief of the Urban Development and Building Office, Makwanpur, Bhupendra Yadav, said contracts worth Rs. 39.5 million had been signed for the repair and reconstruction of the damaged structures. The building housing five ministries had been restored under a separate contract worth Rs. 12.8 million.

People repair road through voluntary labour

BY THAKUR PRASAD ACHARYA
Beni, Apr. 20

The long-standing tradition of contributing voluntary labour to development works is gradually fading. However, locals here have set an example by repairing a road used by tourists through collective voluntary effort.

Locals from Ghara of Annapurna Rural Municipality-6 carried out maintenance of the road from Pokharebagar to the popular tourist destination Ghorepani after visitors faced difficulties due to its deteriorated and risky condition. Following the repairs, travel has become easier, and currently, hundreds of tourist vehicles pass along the route daily.

Villagers repaired the Hallelkharka section of the Pokharebagar-Ghorepani road through voluntary labour. The initiative began from Pokharebagar, the centre of Annapurna Rural Municipality, connecting to Ghorepani. Residents from Pokharebagar, Birauta, Hallelkharka, Kurmuni, Bhuvanithan, and Ghara participated voluntarily in the effort. Earlier last week, locals also worked for two days to repair a difficult stretch at Luliya Ghumi by laying stones and constructing a soling base. According to Ward Chairperson Ram Bahadur Khadka, around 40 people, including elected representatives, contributed a full day of labour to build a 15-metre stretch, making it possible for vehicles to operate along the Pokharebagar-Ghorepani road.

The campaign has been coordinated by local youths including Rajaram Baruwal, Bipin Baruwal, and Ram Krishna Khadka. They plan to continue repairing all difficult sections of the road through voluntary efforts.

Previously, landslide-prone areas such as Luliya Ghumi and Hallelkharka, along with the road's poor condition, caused serious difficulties for both locals and tourists traveling to Ghorepani. Vehicles often failed to climb steep sections, got stuck midway, or were involved in accidents due to narrow roads, poor gradients, and sharp turns.

Following repeated pressure from local representatives, the Local Infrastructure Development Office Pokhara has now invited bids to implement the road improvement project, with a budget allocation of Rs. 30 million.

Gandaki water model workshop concludes

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 20

A stakeholder workshop on the water model for the Gandaki River Basin concluded in Lalitpur on Monday, bringing together government officials, experts and development partners to strengthen evidence-based planning for climate resilience and water resource management.

The event, organised under the Gandaki Basin Climate Resilient Project (GBCRP), is being implemented with grant support from the Green Climate Fund in collaboration with the government, the Ministry of Forests and Environment, the Department of Forests and Soil Conservation, the National Trust for Nature Conservation, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

The project aims to enhance the climate resilience of communities and ecosystems across the Gandaki River Basin through long-term, evidence-based planning. Representatives from various ministries, technical committee members, subject experts, academia, development partners, media and other stakeholders participated in the workshop.

Speaking at the programme, Dr. Manish Raj Pandey, Chief of the Climate Change Department at the National Trust for Nature Conservation, highlighted Nepal's efforts to integrate traditional water management practices with modern scientific data, technology and information systems to develop evidence-based climate-resilient plans.

Laxmi Prasad Devkota, technical lead of the water model reconciliation study, presented the key technical aspects of the model developed for the Gandaki River Basin. He explained the data on reconciliation process and its practical applications. The presentation was followed by in-depth discussions, during which participants shared queries, suggestions and constructive feedback.

Dhirendra Kumar Pradhan, Director General of the Department of Forests and Soil Conservation, said the model would provide important guidance for advancing integrated river basin management in the Gandaki region.

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished.
- Lao Tzu

EDITORIAL

Expedite EV Conversion

The Cabinet decision on April 5 established a legal and procedural framework that allowed the conversion of Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicles into Electric Vehicles (EVs). The ongoing Israel-US versus Iran war and the subsequent closure of the Strait of Hormuz have led to a global shortage of petroleum products, triggering an unprecedented increase in the prices of fossil fuels. Nepal, which imports all its oil from India, is also hit hard. In response to the crisis, the government has given a two-day public holiday in government offices, and it has been providing only half-filled LPG gas. The decision to convert ICE vehicles into EVs is a crucial step in promoting green energy and curbing air pollution, which has emerged as one of the most pressing public health challenges in Nepal.

Rising fuel prices have placed an enormous burden on our economy, and once the fuel price increases, it triggers a chain reaction, leading to an increase in vehicle fares and daily consumable goods. Nepal has made a steady stride in the energy sector lately. At this time of crisis, many people have switched to induction stoves operated with electricity. Now more than 95 per cent of citizens have access to electricity. Nepal's installed capacity of power generation is around 4000 megawatts per day. Purchase of EVs has also risen lately. A gradual increase in electricity production has come as a boon in the time of fuel crisis. However, the public is disheartened as the government has not reduced customs on EV purchases, which contradicts the government's policy of promoting EVs.

A 16-year-old internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicle owned by Sajha Yatayat was successfully converted into an electric vehicle (EV) two years ago. This move aims to promote the use of domestic hydroelectricity, reduce environmental pollution and decrease the national trade deficit caused by the import of petroleum products. At a time when Nepal has been spending over Rs. 350 billion annually on petroleum products, governments bringing forward a policy to convert IEC vehicles to EVs is commendable. This has become a major development, as a clause in Section 39 of the Motor Vehicle and Transport Management Act (1992) had long prohibited any structural or engine modifications to vehicles. The initial installation cost for the conversion is high, but in the long run, switching to environmentally friendly, sustainable energy sources is cheap.

Before Sajha Yatayat buses converted into EVs two years and Bikram tempos turned into electric 'Safa Tempos' in 1999. This was considered one of the world's successful large-scale transitions to electric public transport. Vehicle conversion to EVs is important from an environmental perspective as well, when the Air Quality Index (AQI) of Kathmandu is 122, unhealthy for sensitive people. Likewise, apart from monsoon months, the air quality index of Kathmandu and other major cities in the country is consistently unhealthy.

Thus, when the country is grappling with air pollution and increasing fossil fuel crisis and price hikes, the government's framework has given much-needed relief. However, the conversion to a battery system is costly and requires major engineering changes. Hence, the government should focus on reducing conversion cost so that people can feel benefited in a real sense.

Inheritance Of Opinion

SWAANSH MAHAT

Most people have opinions about everything. Politics, relationships, careers, success. Ask a question and the answer comes quickly, confidently, almost automatically. It sounds certain, like it has been properly thought through. But if you push a little further, something starts to show. A lot of these opinions are not really theirs.

They come from somewhere else. From family, from social media, from whatever voice has been repeated the most. Over time, repetition starts to feel like belief. You hear something often enough, you start saying it yourself, and eventually you stop questioning where it came from in the first place. It is subtle, which is why it is easy to miss.

You grow up hearing what a "good life" looks like. A stable job, certain degrees, certain timelines. You are told what is acceptable, what is not, what is respected, and what is looked down on. At first, it feels like guidance. Later, it becomes a script. Most people follow it without realising they ever had a choice.

It takes time, discomfort, and a willingness to stand alone sometimes. It means questioning things that have always been treated as obvious. It means admitting that what you believed might not actually hold up. So instead, it is easier to adopt what is already there.

You repeat what sounds reasonable. You agree with what feels familiar. You align with what is widely accepted. It keeps things simple and smooth, but it also keeps things shallow. An opinion you have never challenged is not really an opinion. It is an inheritance.

When your thinking is borrowed, your decisions start to follow the same pattern. You choose paths that make sense to others but feel distant to you. You follow timelines that look right but do not feel right. From the outside, everything seems stable. From the inside, something feels slightly off, but not enough to disrupt anything.

There is a quiet kind of discomfort that comes with realising this. It is not dramatic. It shows up in small moments, like when you hesitate before answering a simple question about what you actually want. Not what sounds right. Not what is expected but what you want. And there is no immediate answer. That pause says more than anything else.

Thinking for yourself does not mean rejecting everything around you but being able to explain why you believe what you believe. It means tracing your ideas back to their source and deciding whether they still make sense to you. It means being willing to change your mind without feeling like you are losing something.

Most people avoid this because it creates friction. It makes things uncertain. But without it, there is a different kind of cost. You can spend years building a life that looks right and still feel disconnected from it. You can be certain about everything and still not feel like any of it is yours.

At some point, that catches up. Because a life built on borrowed opinions will always feel slightly borrowed too.

Economic Reform Essential For Growth

Dr. Prakash Kumar Shrestha

Following the election on 5 March 2026, the Rastriya Swatantra Party has formed a government with a landslide victory. A chance of political stability presents a crucial opportunity to initiate long-overdue economic reforms to meet the aspirations of prosperous Nepal. Some socio-economic progress has been achieved in the past: per capita income has risen to approximately $1,500, and social indicators such as literacy, female school enrolment, and life expectancy have improved. Infant and maternal mortality rates have dropped. Access to electricity, clean drinking water, and telecommunications now reaches close to the entire population, and the road network has reached all district headquarters.

However, beneath these achievements lies a sluggish and weak economy. Nepal's average growth rate is hovering around 4 per cent, resulting in the lowest per capita income in South Asia. The lack of enough domestic employment opportunities forces millions of youth to seek foreign employment. The post-COVID-19 period has seen stagnating investment and a declining gross capital formation-to-GDP ratio. Despite excess liquidity in banks with historical low interest rates, credit uptake has been very low, reflecting weak investment. Non-performing loans are rising, challenging the financial stability. Many saving and credit cooperatives are in trouble, depriving many depositors of getting their own savings.

Cooperative crisis

Cooperative crisis has also contributed to recent economic slackness because many Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) rely on it for credit. On the other hand, rapid out-migration has reduced the aggregate domestic demand. Private sector morale is low, and the real estate market is sluggish. Nepal is in FATF's grey list due to poor governance and weakness in preventing money laundering activities. The quality of education, health, and drinking water is low, and public service delivery is still weak. Poor project selection, inefficient budget allocation and weak implementation have caused time and cost overruns, yielding low economic returns. Consequently, growth and revenue mobilisation remain weak, though public debt has jumped up to about Rs. 2.9 trillion.

The external sector is also vulnerable. Exports are weak, imports are high, because of which the trade deficit has been widening continuously. Although remittances inflow has been contributing to building up foreign exchange reserves, the dominance of imports over exports has been weakening demand for domestic goods. As Nepal is transiting this year from a least developed country status, it will further risks losing grants, export preferences, and easy use of intellectual property. This is going to further weaken exports, eliminate jobs, and dampen economic growth.

Despite these challenges, significant opportunities exist. Nepal can produce massive amounts of hydropower for domestic use and export. Recently, electricity exports to India have outpaced imports. However, due to a lack of sufficient reservoir projects, Nepal itself lacks year-round self-sufficiency. Tourism holds high potential, but only about 1.2 million tourists visit Nepal annually. With 46 per cent forest cover, forest-based industries and production of high-value medicinal herbs are possible. So far, there are untapped minerals such as petroleum gas in Dailekh and iron ore in Dhauwadi, which offer further potential. Cement production from abundant limestone has already made Nepal self-sufficient in cement. While industrial competitiveness is hampered by landlocked geography, information technology (IT) offers a new hope, as reflected in rising IT service exports.

> All three levels of government should support domestic production and increase its consumption.

Nepal's main failure is weak implementation of policies, strategies, and projects, due mainly to weak institutional capacity and commitment, as a result of unstable politics, policy and bureaucracy, along with inadequate provisions of punishment and reward. The right people are rarely placed in the right roles. Projects are often selected by political motive rather than for economic returns. Many laws, rules, and regulations contradict each other. Lawmakers mainly focus on development works in their own constituency. Because of inadequate investment in study and research, policies are not much evidence based. The private sector also fails to innovate or build a competitive workforce. Population growth has been decelerating, resulting in labour shortages in agriculture, construction, and manufacturing.

A wide range of economic reforms is needed, which must focus on achieving high economic growth by increasing both aggregate demand and aggregate supply. Aggregate demand includes consumption, investment, government spending, and net exports. Consumption is high, but we consume more imported goods. A policy should prioritise the consumption of domestic goods, and attempts should be made to reduce production costs by providing easy access to land, energy, and capital. Investment requires an investment-friendly environment, which can be built by removing legal and administrative hassles, building infrastructure, simplifying taxes, ensuring credit access, promoting entrepreneurship with startup ecosystems, facilitating technology transfer, and encouraging foreign investment.

The cooperative crisis should be resolved amicably by establishing a rescue fund and managing the assets of troubled cooperatives. Capital expenditure must increase the productivity of the economy. Project development units within ministries or the National Planning Commission should be established to improve project selection and preparation, focusing on high-return projects. Fiscal policy across all three government levels must be expansionary. External competitiveness should be enhanced by implementing the National Integrated Trade Strategy effectively, enhancing economic diplomacy, improving logistics, and addressing non-trade barriers, and through quality certification.

Investment

In the aggregate supply side, investment should be enhanced in agriculture, industry, tourism, hydropower, and IT by dismantling legal and administrative barriers. Reform should maximise the utilisation of available natural resources such as water, land, forests, and minerals; produce high-value agricultural and herbal products; develop quality technical education; reduce tax burden; and formalise the economy to increase the tax base. All three levels of government should support domestic production and increase its consumption. The working capacity of government machinery and public institutions should be improved.

At the end, the strong, near-two-thirds majority government has a unique opportunity to act without delay. The new government should enact necessary and long-overdue laws for the federal system, remove legal obstacles, distribute responsibilities among the three tiers of government, strengthen institutional capacity, and enhance good governance.

(The author is a former vice chair of the National Planning Commission.)

Folk Stories Mirror Collective Social Reality

Pabin Dhakal

We grow up hearing folk stories as simple moral tales from our elders. They teach us kindness, honesty, and the value of community. But what if these stories carry something more—quiet truths about how our society understands gender, caste, and identity? We think of Nepali stories as childhood memories or moral tales; however, they are an inheritance that we have passed down to generations, and demonstrate our collective values and cultural customs.

While narratives are often seen as a source of entertainment and moral guidance, they also offer a window into understanding social structure and community interactions. Zhang Jian, a Chinese hermeneutic theorist, proposes an interpretive (i.e., hermeneutic) approach to narratives that offers no fixed or absolute (e.g., universal) meaning; meaning emerges through the interpretation of the reader in relation to the cultural context and the written story. In this way, stories act as living narratives. They lead us to examine not only what is explicitly stated in written stories, but also what is implied—especially in relation to power, identity, and inequality.

Imaginative society

Consequently, stories represent much more than a compilation of pain and emotion; they serve as fertile ground upon which to build an imaginative society, and may reveal their further meaning beyond their face value. In examining Nepali stories, there is a consistent theme of caste-based inequality throughout our texts. Many of our stories illustrate a society where one's birth (caste) is the defining factor in determining one's potential—rather than an individual's ability.

The story Latte Damai is an example of a character who is marginalised from society because of his caste and subsequently has limited non-violent options; however, he finds cunning ways to survive and overcome his oppression. He acts out of desperation because society has found ways to devalue him and his ability to perform, and therefore forces individuals to create their own possibilities of resistance to oppression.

According to Zhang Jiang's philosophy, the stories of others reflect our collective social reality, including how social hierarchies function and how struggles occur. The story of Latte Damai illustrates how socioeconomic status shape people decisions, as well as how resilience can be created when pressure exists; therefore, those portrayed as having lower social status in Nepali society may still achieve success despite their circumstance.

Another theme common to these folk tales is one of gender characteristics within the context of Nepali society. There are numerous folk tales which portray men as decision-makers and women as responsible for domestic activities; however, many of the same folk tales depict women as intelligent, capable, and resourceful.

> The stories written in Nepali folklore are more than just previous accounts of history; rather, they are current representations of who we are as a society.

An example can be found in a popular folk tale in which a clever daughter-in-law uses her wit and ingenuity to address the problems of men who do not know what to do. Even with the restrictions placed upon them by the societal structure, she is able to utilise her wisdom to solve problems and to question authority. As such, her actions demonstrate that women are not idle participants but rather are able to play an active role in negotiating and resisting the structures that surround them.

A second deeper level of interpretation reveals that the folk tales discussed above are not solely replicative of historical depictions of gender dynamics, but also provide subtle ways in which to challenge the historical depictions of gender roles. Furthermore, it indicates a disconnect between how society views individuals based on caste or gender and what individuals are capable of accomplishing. Therefore, the cumulative message of all of the folk tales presented above demonstrates an important truth. It is unwise to believe that people should be judged by their caste or gender, for it creates limitations to both the person being judged and also the society that judges them.

Marginalised communities

Throughout all of these tales, characters representing traditionally marginalised communities demonstrate wit, strength, and morality. Therefore, these characters challenge, on a continual basis, the same structures that seek to define their being. While many of the issues of violence against women, discrimination based on caste, and social exclusion based on status may have changed since the end of the civil war in Nepal, many of these attitudes still exist today. Despite substantial social and political change in Nepal, society continues to demonstrate both subtle and overt caste discrimination, gender discrimination, and social exclusion on a daily basis.

Ultimately, Zhang Jiang's philosophy illustrates that critical interpretation of past experiences can also provide insight into the present. Furthermore, the stories written in Nepali folklore are more than just previous accounts of history; rather, they are current representations of who we are as a society. When we listen carefully to their meanings, we will have better understanding not only of our past but also of the type of future we would like to create as a people defined by dignity, equality, and respect for all people.

(Dhakal is a PhD researcher at the School of Global Education and Development, University of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (UCASS).

50 YEARS AGO

THE RISING NEPAL

April 21, 1976

Ilam-Panchthar Link Road Built

Ilam, April 20: A 6-kilometre motorable road linking Ilam with Panchthar has been constructed with voluntary labour of local people, reports RSS.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

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READER'S MAIL

Reduce Dependence On Imported Fuel

I am writing to share my concern about the recent rise in fuel prices in Nepal, especially diesel and kerosene, which have now become more expensive than petrol. This situation is creating problems in the daily lives of ordinary people.

When diesel becomes expensive, transportation costs also increase. This leads to a rise in the prices of food, vegetables, and other daily needs. Because of this, people with low and middle incomes are finding it hard to manage their daily expenses. The increase in price has made life more difficult for those who depend on it for basic needs. Many households are now struggling to afford it.

The rise in fuel prices is also increasing inflation in the country. Students, workers, farmers, and small business owners are all affected. Everything is becoming more expensive, and people are feeling financial pressure in their daily lives. Therefore, I kindly request the concerned authorities to take necessary steps to control fuel prices. They should also consider promoting alternative energy sources like solar and wind electricity, which may reduce dependence on imported fuel.

Pasang Sherpa
Maitighar, Kathmandu

TAILPIECE

A famous professor of surgery died and went to heaven. At the pearly gates, he was asked by the gatekeeper, "Have you ever committed a sin you truly regret?"

"Yes," the professor answered. "When I was a young candidate at the Hospital of Saint Lucas, we played soccer against a team from the Community Hospital, and I scored a goal, which was offside. But the referee did not see it, and the goal won us the match. I regret that now."

"Well," said the gatekeeper. "That is a very minor sin. You may enter."

"Thank you very much, Saint Peter," the professor answered.

"You're welcome, but I am not Saint Peter," said the gatekeeper. "He is having his lunch break. I am Saint Lucas."

7.5 quake hits Japan, tsunami warned

AFP
Japan, Apr. 20

A 7.4-magnitude earthquake struck northern Japan Monday, Japan's Meteorological Agency (JMA) said, issuing a tsunami warning for waves up to three metres (10 feet).

The quake, which hit at 4:53pm (0753 GMT) in Pacific waters off northern Iwate prefecture, was strong enough to shake large buildings as far as Tokyo, hundreds of kilometres away.

Around 40 minutes later, an 80-centimetre (31-inch) tsunami wave hit a port in Kuji in Iwate, according to the JMA.

"Evacuate immediately from coastal regions and riverside areas to a safer place such as high ground or an evacuation building," it said, warning that damage due to tsunami waves was expected.

"Tsunami waves are expected to hit repeatedly. Do not leave safe ground until the warning is lifted," it said.

Footage from national broadcaster NHK did not show any immediate visible damage around several ports in Iwate.

A JMA official warned in a televised press briefing that more quakes could strike the area.

The prime minister's office said it had set up a crisis management team.

"For those of you who live in areas for which the warnings have been issued, please evacuate to higher, safer places such as higher ground," Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi told reporters, adding that the government was trying to confirm whether there were any casualties or property damage.

Japan is one of the world's most seismically active countries, sitting on top of four major tectonic plates along the western edge of the Pacific "Ring of Fire".

The archipelago, home to around 125 million people, typically experiences around 1,500 jolts every year and accounts for about 18 percent of the world's earthquakes.

The vast majority are mild, although the damage they cause varies according to their location and the depth below the Earth's surface at which they strike.

Japan is haunted by the memory of a massive 9.0-magnitude undersea quake in 2011, which triggered a tsunami that killed around 18,500 people and caused a devastating meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear plant.

In 2024, the JMA issued its first special advisory of a possible "megaquake" along the Nankai Trough.

This 800-kilometre undersea trench is where the Philippine Sea oceanic tectonic plate is "subducting" – or slowly slipping – underneath the continental plate that Japan sits atop.

The government has said a quake in the Nankai Trough and subsequent tsunami could kill as many as 298,000 people and cause up to $2 trillion in damage.

The JMA lifted the 2024 advisory after a week but it led to panic-buying of staples like rice and prompted holidaymakers to cancel hotel reservations.It issued a week-long second "megaquake" advisory in December 2025 after a magnitude-7.5 tremor struck off the northern coast.

The December 8 quake triggered tsunami waves of up to 70 centimetres (28 inches) and injured more than 40 people, but no major damage was reported.

PHOTO: REUTERS

The tsunami warning on Japanese television on April 20, 2026.

Iran says no plan for US peace talks

AFP
Tehran, Apr. 20

Iran insisted it has no plan to attend a new round of negotiations with the United States on Monday, as uncertainty grows over a push to stop the Middle East war from resuming.

US President Donald Trump said he was sending negotiators to Pakistan for talks on ending the war that engulfed the region and rattled global markets, while repeating threats to attack Iran's energy infrastructure if it did not make a deal.

After initial talks ended without a deal in Islamabad earlier this month, both sides have traded accusations of ceasefire violations, including the US seizure of an Iranian cargo ship early Monday that Trump said was trying to evade a US blockade of the country's ports.

"We have no plans for the next round of negotiation, and no decision has been made in this regard," said foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei.

"While claiming diplomacy and readiness for negotiations, the US is carrying out behaviours that do not in any way indicate seriousness in pursuing a diplomatic process," he added, calling the US blockade and cargo ship seizure "clear violations of the ceasefire".

Iran says the US blockade and attack breached the two-week truce set to end overnight Tuesday and threatened to retaliate, while Trump says Tehran has breached the ceasefire in the crucial Strait of Hormuz, which it has all but shut.

The counter-claims have thrown into fresh doubt the bid to end the war that began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran the morning of February 28, killing the country's supreme leader Ali Khamenei.

"We're offering a very fair and reasonable DEAL, and I hope they take it," Trump said in a social media post.

Oil prices jumped sharply on Monday over fears hostilities could resume in the weeks-long war, after Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz again over the weekend following its brief reopening on Friday in recognition of a ceasefire in Lebanon.

In spite of the uncertainty surrounding the talks in Pakistan, security has been visibly stepped up in the capital, Islamabad.

Authorities announced road closures and traffic restrictions across the city, as well as in neighbouring Rawalpindi.

The US president said his negotiators, whom he did not name, would arrive in Islamabad on Monday evening.

A White House official said Vice President JD Vance would lead the delegation after Trump said he would not, citing security concerns. He would be joined by Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, the official said.

Trump has been under pressure to find an off-ramp since Tehran moved to choke off the Strait of Hormuz.

But the cargo ship attack and naval blockade to cut off Iran's oil revenues drew renewed threats from Tehran instead of immediately bringing them back to the negotiating table.

On Sunday, Trump announced that a massive Iranian-flagged cargo ship "tried to get past our Naval Blockade, and it did not go well for them," adding a US destroyer blew "a hole in the engineroom" before US Marines seized the vessel.

The ISNA news agency later cited a spokesperson for Iran's central command centre as warning that the military "will soon respond and retaliate against this armed piracy and the US military".

US begins 'biggest ever' Philippines war games

AFP
Manila, Apr. 20

Thousands of American and Philippine troops, joined for the first time by a significant contingent of Japanese forces, began annual military exercises Monday set against the backdrop of the Middle East war.

The war games will feature live-fire exercises in the north of the Philippines facing the Taiwan Strait, as well as a province off the disputed South China Sea, where Philippine and Chinese forces have engaged in repeated confrontations.

In one drill, the Japanese military, which is contributing about 1,400 personnel, will use a Type 88 cruise missile to sink a World War II-era minesweeper off the coast of northern Luzon island.

More than 17,000 soldiers, airmen and sailors are taking part in the 19-day Balikatan, or "Shoulder to Shoulder," exercises -- about the same number as last year's edition, including contingents from Australia, New Zealand, France and Canada.

Balikatan comes as Iran and the United States, along with Israel, edge towards the end of the two-week ceasefire that halted the Middle East war, ignited by surprise US-Israeli strikes on the Islamic republic.

"Regardless of the challenges elsewhere in the world, the United States' focus on the Indo-Pacific and our ironclad commitment to the Philippines remains unwavering," US Lieutenant General Christian Wortman said at Monday's opening ceremony.

Without providing precise numbers, Wortman, commander of the Marine Expeditionary Force, later told reporters that approximately 10,000 US personnel would take part in the exercises.

Philippine military chief General Romeo Brawner added that US Indo-Pacific Command chief Admiral Samuel Paparo had assured him at the war's outbreak that this year's Balikatan would be "the biggest ever".

Among the high-end weapons expected to be used is a US Typhon missile system that has been in the archipelago since visiting US forces left it there in 2024, provoking outrage from Beijing.

"We anticipate that it will be incorporated at some level during the course of the exercise," Wortman said.

While both militaries insisted that no exercises would take place "near Taiwan", coastal defence drills are set fewer than 200 kilometres (120 miles) from the island's southern coast.

Beijing has ramped up military pressure around self-ruled Taiwan, which it considers part of its territory and has threatened to use force to seize.

China slammed the joint exercises on Monday, saying the United States, Japan and the Philippines were "playing with fire".

Fire destroys 1,000 homes in Malaysian coastal village

AP
Kuala Lumpur, Apr. 20

A fire that tore through a Malaysian coastal settlement on Borneo Island destroyed about 1,000 homes and displaced over 9,000 people, authorities said.

The fire started early Sunday in the Sandakan district and spread rapidly through rows of wooden houses constructed on stilts above the sea, according to the fire and rescue department.

Officials said strong winds and the close proximity of the structures helped fuel the fire, while narrow access routes and low tide conditions made it harder for emergency crews to reach affected areas and contain the flames.

No deaths have been reported, though thousands of residents have been forced from their homes and moved to temporary shelter.

Water villages — informal settlements built over the sea — are found along much of the coastline of Sabah, one of the poorest states in Malaysia. The homes are tightly packed, made from wood and other combustible materials, and often lack basic infrastructure. Many residents are from low-income or marginalized communities, including Indigenous groups and people without formal citizenship status.

Village head Sharif Hashim Sharif Iting was cited by Sabah's Daily Express newspaper as saying the cause was a cooking fire that got out of control. The cause of the fire has not been confirmed and remains under investigation.

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said federal and state agencies were coordinating relief efforts, with immediate assistance focused on displaced families.

Fires in Sabah's water villages have occurred repeatedly over the years. Sabah authorities have long acknowledged that water villages are highly fire-prone, but broader safety upgrades to such settlements remain an ongoing challenge.

PHOTO: AP

This photo distributed by Sandakan Fire and Rescue Department shows a fire at a coastal settlement in the Sandakan district of Sabah state on Borneo Island, Malaysia, Sunday, April 19, 2026.

PRISM

Fake bear attack insurance scam

California: Three people were sentenced this week in an insurance fraud scam that saw them wear a bear costume while damaging luxury cars in California.

Alfiya Zuckerman, Ruben Tamrazian and Vahe Muradkhanyan all pleaded no contest on Thursday to felony insurance fraud and were sentenced to 180 days in jail, while a fourth person involved in the scheme, Ararat Chirkinian, has a preliminary hearing scheduled for September.

The four were caught because they submitted video of three fake attacks on cars to three different companies, but one group of investigators noticed the "bear" in a Rolls Royce moved in ways more similar to a human, The Los Angeles Times and The Guardian reported.

Chinese car firm patents voice-activated 'in-car toilet'

China:A Chinese car company successfully filed to patent a voice-activated "in-vehicle toilet" that slides out from under a passenger seat.

Chongqing-based automaker Seres filed an application under patent number CN224104011U in April 2025, and the patent was officially authorized earlier this month.The patent filing for the "in-vehicle toilet" states that it is intended to "satisfy users' toilet needs on long journeys, while camping or while staying in the car."

The toilet, which is voice activated, stores waste in a tank with a rotating heating element to evaporate urine and dry solid waste. An exhaust fan is also included to take care of odors.

Agencies

TODAY IN HISTORY

1509– Henry VIII ascends the throne of England on the death of his father, Henry VII.
1615 – The Wignacourt Aqueduct is inaugurated in Malta.
1802 – Twelve thousand Wahhabis sack Karbala, killing over three thousand inhabitants.
1806 – Action of 21 April 1806: A French frigate escapes British forces off the coast of South Africa.
1898– Spanish–American War: The United States Navy begins a blockade of Cuban ports.
1914 – Ypiranga incident: A German arms shipment to Mexico is intercepted by the U.S. Navy near Veracruz.
1948 – United Nations Security Council Resolution 47 relating to Kashmir conflict is adopted.
1950 – The Nainital wedding massacre occurs, killing 22 members of the Harijan caste.

Nations meet for first fossil fuel exit summit

AFP
Paris, Apr. 20

More than 50 nations are attending a world-first conference on phasing out fossil fuels in Colombia next week as the Iran war underscores how dependent countries remain on planet-heating coal, oil and gas.

Ministers arrive in the Caribbean city of Santa Marta against a backdrop of wartime fuel shortages, soaring prices and a scramble for energy security in what the International Energy Agency has called the biggest oil supply shock ever.The gathering was born out of frustration with consensus-based United Nations climate talks, where efforts to negotiate a fossil fuel exit strategy have stalled.

But organisers say the energy shock caused by Iran's chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, the key transit point for Gulf oil and gas shipments, has strengthened the case for a fossil fuel phaseout, even as some countries look to coal in the short-term to secure supplies.

Concerns over energy security are expected to shape the high-level discussions over April 28 and 29 as much as climate priorities, analysts say.

The meeting was announced months ago but has taken on "greater relevance" with the energy crisis, said Colombia's environment minister Irene Velez Torres, whose country is co-hosting with the Netherlands.

Major fossil fuel producing nations Australia, Canada and Norway are expected along with developing oil giants Angola, Mexico and Brazil and coal-reliant emerging markets Turkey and Vietnam.

They will join dozens of other countries from small-island developing states to major economies Germany, France and the UK.

However the world's biggest coal, oil and gas producers -- notably the United States, China, Saudi Arabia and Russia -- are skipping the event.

It will be closely watched for political signals from an emerging coalition of fossil fuel producers and consumers pushing for a phaseout outside the UN process.

Colombia -- a coal and oil exporter -- said the "strategically important" participating countries accounted for one-fifth of global fossil fuel production and nearly one-third of consumption.

Fossil fuel interests have been accused of influencing UN negotiations on climate change and some governments and activists have questioned the involvement of producer nations in Santa Marta.

"The larger the group of countries, the more diffused the interests are and the less chance you've got of getting a sharp outcome," climate scientist Bill Hare, founder of Climate Analytics think tank, told AFP.

Velez Torres said, however, it was a "major step forward" to have producer countries present tackling this "taboo".

"We need to start a more honest space where we can discuss this more openly, and bring all cards to the table. Nobody is saying that the way to eliminating fossil fuels is easy. But we need to bring these people together," she said.

For some, the conference's appeal is partly its distance from the UN climate talks."I think the Santa Marta meeting is long overdue," Maina Talia, climate minister of low-lying Tuvalu, told reporters. Roughly twice as much investment goes into clean energy as fossil fuels, which are the primary driver of human-caused climate change.

But heat-trapping emissions from burning coal, oil and gas rose again in 2025 to a record high.In response to the energy crisis, some countries intend to ramp up coal use to plug short-term supply gaps, underlining the challenge of reducing reliance on fossil fuels even in advanced economies.

PHOTO: AFP

The global energy crisis triggered by the Iran war has seen some countries rely on coal to meet short-term demand.

AMBASSADORS PRESENT CREDENTIALS TO PRESIDENT

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 20

Four newly appointed non-resident ambassadors have presented their credentials to President Ramchandra Paudel.

According to Presidential Spokesperson Ritesh Kumar Shakya, the non-resident ambassadors to Nepal, including Mustafa Jawara of Gambia, Christopher Kuter of Canada, Tomasz Mencin of Slovenia and Abdener Kherifi of Algeria, presented their credentials at separate ceremonies held at the President House on Monday.

PHOTO: RSS

Labourers carrying a devotee on a palanquin to Muktinath Temple in Baragung Muktikshetra Rural Municipality-1, Mustang on Monday.

Upcoming budget a 'collective test' amid fiscal strain: Dr. Wagle

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 20

Finance Minister Dr. Swarnim Wagle held a comprehensive discussion with ministers and secretaries of all line ministries on Monday at the Ministry of Finance regarding preparations for the budget for the upcoming fiscal year 2026/27.

Vice-Chairperson of the National Planning Commission, Dr. Gunakar Bhatta, along with other members of the Commission and the Prime Minister's Advisor on Administration and Governance, Sudip Dhakal, attended the meeting.

The discussion focused on the contemporary economic and financial situation and the challenges of budget formulation and implementation, according to a press statement of the Ministry of Finance.

On the occasion, Finance Minister Dr. Wagle emphasised that the upcoming budget would be a "collective test" for all in the context of Nepal's strained public finances.

He noted that, with mandatory state obligations amounting to Rs. 1,330 billion and projected revenue of Rs. 1,180 billion, it would be challenging to address citizens' aspirations through the budget.

He stressed the need to prioritise key principles in budget formulation, including good governance, institutional strengthening at both micro and macro levels, integrity in public policy, and broad-based economic growth.

He also said that the upcoming budget must focus on promoting private investment, expanding information technology, advancing green manufacturing, developing infrastructure for capital formation, growing the middle class, uplifting marginalised communities, and promoting soft power.

The Finance Minister informed all ministries about the Ministry of Finance's obligations and limitations.

Dr. Wagle urged all ministries to set their priorities in line with fiscal constraints and to actively engage in the budget formulation process.

Ministers from various sectoral ministries highlighted key issues, challenges, and priorities related to their respective budgets and programmes, said the Ministry.

During the session, Finance Secretary Ghanshyam Upadhyaya briefed participants on recent decisions taken by the Ministry of Finance, including facilitating budget reallocation authority at the line ministry level and revising the timeframe for source approval of multi-year contracts.

Similarly, Joint Secretary of the Budget and Programme Division, Dr. Suman Dahal, presented an overview of the current status of budget preparation for the upcoming fiscal year, according to a press statement issued by the Ministry of Finance.

This meeting marks the first time that all line ministries have been invited to the Ministry of Finance for a joint discussion on budget preparation, priorities, and fiscal discipline, said the Ministry.

Musahar children scavenge bricks to build their dream homes

BY SUDHA DEV
Rajbiraj (Saptari), Apr. 20

Children from the Musahar community in Ward No. 6 of Rajbiraj have been scavenging for bricks in mud, hoping to build proper homes for themselves.

They can be seen searching through debris and muddy soil along the roadside in Ward No. 7, where houses have been demolished and drains dug for road expansion. The children collect usable bricks from the rubble, dreaming of building walls for their fragile huts.

Every day, children aged between five and twelve spend hours from morning till evening gathering bricks. By the end of the day, they load the collected bricks onto city safaris and take them home.

According to local Ramita Sharma, this has been their daily routine for the past 15 days. "As soon as bricks emerge from the mud during demolition and excavation, dozens of children rush to grab them, often scrambling in the muddy road," she said.

Deepak Sada, 10, said his father works as a daily wage labourer, but the income is not enough to feed the family amid rising prices. "We have nothing except a small hut for shelter. I come here every day to collect bricks, hoping to one day we would be able to build a brick house," he said.

With schools currently closed, Deepak and his seven-year-old brother Om spend their days collecting bricks, hoping they will at least be enough to build walls for their home.

PHOTO: TRN

Musahar children searching for bricks in the mud in Rajbiraj.

Similarly, Satyanarayan Sada, 11, spends his days collecting bricks from waste and mud. "We are always afraid that our weak thatched house could be blown away by strong winds. We are doing this work in the hope that we can at least build walls and put a tin roof over them," he said.

Not only these children, but many others in the settlement are engaged in collecting bricks from the roadside. Their main aim is to replace their fragile huts with brick structures.

Local Om Prakash Sah said that despite living in a market area, the economic and educational conditions of the Musahar community remain extremely poor. "With little means to build homes, children themselves have started searching for bricks in the market area," he added.

President Thapa initiates for broader unity in NC

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 20

Nepali Congress (NC) president Gagan Kumar Thapa has initiated efforts to strengthen party unity following the Supreme Court verdict on the party's legitimacy.

Thapa met outgoing acting president Purna Bahadur Khadka at the latter's residence in Golfutar and said the meeting was a part of a broader effort to resolve internal differences and consolidate the party. "I have started a dialogue with senior leaders for greater unity of the party," said Thapa. He added that recent developments had created an opportunity to move forward collectively.

He noted that the Supreme Court's ruling had paved the way for a common journey to rebuild and strengthen the NC. With the process for the party's 15th general convention already underway, Thapa called on leaders and cadres to seize the moment to reform and revitalise the organisation by ensuring the convention's success.

This comes against the backdrop of the NC's asking Khadga for clarification regarding his use of the post of acting president and using the official party pad, even though the Election Commission had already given the Thapa-led faction legitimacy.

Meanwhile, NC general secretary Pradip Poudel said the court's decision had provided clarity without creating a win–lose situation. Speaking at a programme in Hetauda during a review of Bagmati Province elections, Poudel pledged to unite all factions within the party ahead of the upcoming convention.

He said the party would take the current situation as an opportunity to bring members onto a shared path. Noting that the updating of active membership is going on, Poudel stressed that the process would be carried out without discrimination. He urged ward chairpersons to complete membership distribution and renewal transparently, including re-engaging former members who had left the party.

Similarly, issuing a press release, the NC reaffirmed its commitment to transparency and accountability, stating that concerns raised publicly regarding the sources of wealth of ministers must be taken seriously. The party highlighted the need for a credible, impartial and evidence-based investigation.

Karnali grapples with high maternal...

Similarly, on September 17, 2023, Janaki Regmi of Panchpuri Municipality–2, Surkhet, also died at the hospital.

She had been admitted to the maternity ward of the Provincial Hospital after experiencing labour pains. Although no complications were initially observed, she died two days after delivery, according to the hospital.

Both incidents are of a similar nature. In Karnali Province, several postpartum mothers have been dying even after reaching hospitals. Every year, maternal deaths continue to be reported in the region.

While some women die after arriving at health facilities, others lose their lives before they can access medical care.

Not only mothers, but infant mortality is also equally concerning. The maternal and neonatal mortality rates in Karnali remain alarmingly high. Each year, many mothers and newborns die due to various causes, including excessive bleeding, embolism, uterine rupture, and eclampsia. The number of such deaths appears to be increasing rather than declining.

According to the National Census 2021, Karnali Province still records a maternal mortality rate of 172 per 100,000 live births, which is higher than the national average and other provinces.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, the government and various non-governmental organisations claim to be working to reduce this rate to 70 by 2030.

However, despite Surkhet hosting relatively well-equipped health facilities and trained personnel, a significant number of women continue to die even after reaching the Karnali Provincial Hospital.

The lack of blood bank and intensive care unit (ICU) facilities in health institutions has been identified as a major factor contributing to maternal mortality during delivery.

Delays in blood supply often prove fatal. In many hospitals, the absence of uterotonic drugs, which are essential to control postpartum haemorrhage, further complicates treatment.

Under the government's Safe Motherhood Programme, free health checkups, travel allowances, and the "warm clothes package" are provided to pregnant women.

However, the effectiveness of these initiatives remains questionable. According to Shobha Yogi, an Auxiliary Nurse Midwife at Chhepadi Health Post in Aathbiskot Municipality–9, Dailekh, maternal deaths occur at home, on the way to hospitals, or during referrals between health facilities.

Public health expert Dr. Sharad Wonta attributes these deaths to a lack of essential medicines, insufficient specialist doctors, inadequate training for medical staff, and the absence of well-equipped maternity wards in many hospitals.

He also noted that a lack of community awareness about safe delivery practices leads to delays in seeking medical care, often resulting in fatal outcomes.

Meanwhile, relatives of pregnant and postpartum women frequently accuse hospitals of negligence in such cases.

Snow blankets Bhairavkunda...

There is a belief that Bhairavkunda is the abode of Lord Shiva and Parvati. Bhairav, a fierce form of Shiva, is regarded as the destroyer, and the lake is considered a divine playground of the deity. Nearby lies Deudhunga, another tourist site in Bigu, Dolakha, located along the border of Sindhupalchok and Dolakha districts. Many visitors undertake a religious pilgrimage to both sites.

Devotees believe that wishes made at Bhairavkunda with a pure heart are fulfilled. This belief draws pilgrims and tourists from Nepal, China, India, Europe, America and Japan. The cool climate further enhances the experience.

The Bhairavkunda area is rich in biodiversity, with a variety of medicinal herbs such as yarsagumba, sunpati, panchaule, chiraito, jatamasi and others. Wildlife found in the region includes tigers, bears, leopards, wolves, snow leopards, wild boars, Himalayan tahr, ghoral, pheasants, deer and pangolins, making it an important habitat for rare species.

Reaching Bhairavkunda can be challenging. Visitors must cross steep cliffs, forests and rivers, and may need to stay in yak sheds along the way. There are no shops en route, so travellers are advised to carry sufficient food and supplies. The trekking route is difficult in parts.

Tourist inflow is highest between August and October, and again from March to May.

I will abide by party decisions...

"The investment was financed through credit. There is a written loan agreement dated 2023/09/15," he said. "The borrowed amount was transferred through banking channels and used for investment. Everything is traceable through the bank, what is there to hide?"

Gurung dismissed claims of partnership with Deepak Bhatta, who is currently in custody over allegations of financial irregularities and money laundering, and the Shankar Group.

Noting that a single company can have hundreds of shareholders, he said, "Buying shares does not mean entering into partnerships with everyone. That company includes investments from media houses to banks. Are all of them partners or culpable? It is not appropriate to link a later incident with a past decision."

The Nepali Congress and the Gen Z Movement had raised concerns of a potential conflict of interest, arguing that his position as Home Minister could influence investigations.

In response, Gurung said, "The investigating authority is not the Ministry of Home Affairs, but the Department of Money Laundering Investigation under the Ministry of Finance. The process is already underway. Had I interfered, the investigation would not have proceeded at all." Addressing criticism that he had remained silent on the matter, he said it is not appropriate to react hastily to legally sensitive issues.

"Rumours spread quickly, but truth emerges only with evidence," he said.

The minister, representing the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) in the government led by Balendra Shah, stated that personal investments cannot be equated with collusion with intermediaries. He also clarified that he is ready to fully cooperate with any investigation and abide by all party decisions.

"The sacrifice of the martyrs and the spirit of the Gen Z movement make us responsible. We must stand on evidence, not rumours," he wrote.

Resource crunch stalls postal...

Waiting for revival

Despite the government assigning additional responsibilities, staff remain uncertain due to limited resources. However, Nayeb Subba Bhojraj Niraula said they are ready to implement the government's decision and are hopeful that necessary manpower and resources will be provided.

Currently, the bulk of postal work involves delivering letters from private banks. According to Dipendra Katwal, a first-class non-gazetted officer, most correspondence comes from courts, land revenue offices, district administration offices, and legal cases, while personal letters have become extremely rare.

While the government has entrusted the postal service with new responsibilities to modernize and improve efficiency, the lack of adequate resources poses a serious challenge. Without sufficient investment in transportation, infrastructure, and technology, timely delivery of government documents and the revival of the postal system will remain difficult to achieve.

HOT WINDS INCREASE IN TARAI

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 20

Hot winds (known as loo) have gripped some parts of Tarai, with temperatures soaring to 40 degrees Celsius or above and maximum temperatures are expected to remain at or above 40 degrees Celsius for the next three days.

The Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM) said in its special bulletin on Monday that some areas of Lumbini and Sudurpashchim provinces recorded temperature soaring to 40 degrees Celsius or above on April 19, while several locations across Madhes, Bagmati, Gandaki and Lumbini provinces recorded highs of around 38 degrees Celsius. According to the Bulletin, the temperature conditions across the country, maximum temperatures are expected to remain at or above 40 degrees Celsius for the next three days in many parts of the Tarai in Lumbini and Sudurpashchim provinces.

Since extreme heat is expected to continue in parts of the Tarai in Madhes, Bagmati, Gandaki, and Lumbini provinces (around 38°C), DHM requested everyone to take necessary precautions. A moderate heat wave is expected for the next three days in the Tarai regions of Lumbini and Sudurpashchim provinces.

DHM asked districts including -- Kanchanpur, Kailali, Dadeldhura, Doti, Bardiya, Banke, Dang, Kapilvastu, and Rupandehi to be prepared for the extreme heat.

Syangja children learn sarangi from elders

BY ARJUN KAFLE
Syangja, Apr. 20

PHOTO: ARJUN KAFLE

In the past, sarangi was played to convey informational messages to villagers through song and also to express the joys and sorrows through the melodious tunes of the instrument. Today, however, such scenes have become rare in villages and marketplaces.

Sarangi, a traditional musical instrument, is no longer commonly played in rural areas, as the new generation has lost interest in it.

Jivika Pariyar, a seventh-grade student at Syangja Higher Secondary School, has been enjoying a term break as the academic session has not yet begun. During this time, she has learned to play the traditional Nepali instrument, sarangi, from a senior citizen.

Similarly, Susant Gandharva, a student at Tribhuvan Adarsh Secondary School, said that learning to play sarangi, both a traditional instrument and part of a fading profession, will support his dream of becoming a musician in the future.

Like Jivika and Susant, 20 children in the area have learned to play the sarangi during the break before the new academic session.

The Gandaki Province Integrated Service Office, Syangja, has initiated a programme to pass on sarangi-playing skills to children. This effort is part of a 10-day intergenerational knowledge, skills, and experience transfer programme organised in Putalibazaar-13, Lampata.

Jeevan Poudel, Chief of the Integrated Service Office, Syangja, said that sarangi, a traditional instrument of the Gandharva community, is a priceless asset of Nepali culture and heritage. He added that its preservation, promotion, and transmission can positively influence children's creativity, patience, concentration, and emotional development.

Trainer Suryaman Gandharva said that passing on the skill of playing the sarangi is not only about teaching an art form but also about preserving culture, identity, and values.

Juddha Bahadur Rana, Ward Chair of Putali Bazaar Municipality Ward No. 13, said that when senior citizens and children exchange skills, it fosters mutual love, respect, and understanding. He added that such interactions help maintain harmony within families and society, inspire children to become artists in the future, and ensure the transfer of social values and experience.

DEEPIKA, RANVEER ANNOUNCE SECOND PREGNANCY

AGENCIES
New Delhi, Apr. 20

Indian film stars Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh have announced that they are expecting their second child, sharing the news with fans via Instagram on Sunday.

The couple posted a cryptic image featuring their daughter, Dua Padukone Singh, holding a positive pregnancy test, accompanied by a caption of evil eye emojis. The understated reveal quickly drew widespread attention, with fellow actors including Kiara Advani, Parineeti Chopra, Sunil Grover, Bhumi Pednekar and Samantha Ruth Prabhu offering their congratulations in the comments.

Padukone and Singh were married in 2018 in a private ceremony at Lake Como, Italy, after nearly six years of dating. They welcomed their first child, Dua, on September, 8- 2024.

Professionally, Padukone has several high-profile projects in development, including King alongside Shah Rukh Khan, and Raaka starring Allu Arjun. However, she has also been vocal about advocating for more balanced working conditions as a new mother, reportedly stepping away from major productions such as Spirit and Kalki 2898 AD Part 2 after her request for an eight-hour workday was not accommodated.

World of Dance Nepal returns

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 20

The Nepali version of the dance competition World of Dance Nepal 2026 was officially announced during a programme held in Kathmandu on Sunday.

The second edition of the competition was launched at a special press conference, where the panel of judges, prize money, and audition dates were revealed.Originally launched in Southern California in 2008 and now expanded to over 50 countries, the platform aims to introduce Nepali talent to the global stage by bringing the competition to Nepal.

At the press conference, the programme's trailer was screened. As the main highlight of the event, renowned Bollywood choreographer and contemporary dance icon Terence Lewis was announced as the 'Celebrity Grand Judge', accompanied by the presentation of his introductory video.

Terence Lewis is widely known as a prominent judge on major Indian reality shows such as Dance India Dance and India's Best Dancer. Alongside Grand Judge Terence Lewis, the judging panel will include Nepal's 'Wild Ripperz Crew' member Kiran Thapa and the Artistic Director of World of Dance Nepal, JD Tamang.

Speaking at the programme, National Director Roshan Gahatraj said that the show was brought to Nepal with the vision of creating an international-level platform where Nepali dancers could showcase their talent.

During the event, the trophy to be awarded to the winners was also unveiled. Judge Kiran Thapa shared that it is plated with 24-carat gold.

The competition has been divided into four main divisions. Winners from each division will receive a cash prize of Rs. 100,000, a 24-carat gold-plated trophy, and various gift hampers.

In addition, awards and gift hampers will be presented in categories such as Best Costume, Best Concept, and Audience Choice.

Auditions will be conducted in five different cities. According to the announced schedule, auditions will take place in Nepalgunj on May 2, Butwal on May 5, Pokhara on May 9, Kathmandu on May 13, and Itahari on May 15. The competitive semi-finals will be held on June 3, followed by the grand finale on June 5.

'Ramayana' aims for global audience

REUTERS
Las Vegas, Apr. 20

The filmmakers behind big-budget Hindu epic "Ramayana" are aiming to bring a classic Hindu story to global audiences this year.

"Ramayana" tells a 5,000-year-old story about Prince Rama, an incarnation of the Hindu deity Vishnu, played by Ranbir Kapoor, who is exiled to the forests for 14 years along with his wife and brother. When his wife is kidnapped, the story brings Rama into conflict with Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, played by Indian actor Yash.

"I have tried to internalize ... the whole essence of Ravana and tried to make him as human as possible at times," Yash said in an interview this week. "It's important for people to relate to him, especially (since) we have global ambitions, so we need to make it familiar to a Western audience as well."

The team behind the films, which have a combined budget of up to $500 million, appeared at the CinemaCon in Las Vegas, where "Ramayana" posters were displayed alongside promotions for Hollywood's upcoming releases.

The first movie will be released in India and the United States on November 8 to coincide with Diwali, the Hindu "festival of lights." The second will come out in 2027. Producer Namit Malhotra said the film would mix elements of fantasy and human drama from movies such as "The Lord of the Rings" and "Gladiator."

"It will promise a very different experience unlike anything traditionally that, let's say, Indian movies offer or even Hollywood for that matter," Malhotra said. "It's meant for the world and it's got the best of the East and the best of the West coming together to make it happen."

Super Mario Galaxy Movie and Project Hail Mary top The Mummy

AP
Los Angeles, Apr. 20

The Super Mario Galaxy Movie and Project Hail Mary continued to dominate the North American box office this weekend, comfortably holding the top two spots while Lee Cronin's The Mummy debuted in third place.

The Mario sequel has now spent all three of its opening weekends at number one, adding a further $35 million. The Universal release has amassed an impressive $747.5 million globally so far.

Meanwhile, Project Hail Mary dipped just 15% in its fifth weekend, taking in $20.5 million. That brings its domestic total to $285.1 million and $573.1 million worldwide. The Amazon MGM Studios release is also benefiting from a renewed run on IMAX screens after temporarily giving them up to Mario. Directors Phil Lord and Chris Miller, along with star Ryan Gosling, recently appeared at CinemaCon to thank cinema owners for helping make it the year's highest-grossing original film.

In third place, Lee Cronin's The Mummy opened to $13.5 million across 3,404 cinemas. Despite backing from Blumhouse Productions and Atomic Monster, the R-rated horror failed to connect strongly with critics or audiences, reflected in a 45% Rotten Tomatoes score and a C+ CinemaScore. Directed by Lee Cronin and starring Jack Reynor, the film follows a family whose missing daughter returns in a disturbing, mummified state. Still, with a modest $22 million budget and $34 million already earned worldwide, it may yet prove financially viable.

Another new release, Normal, starring Bob Odenkirk and directed by Ben Wheatley, opened quietly with $2.7 million. Although critics responded more favourably (77% on Rotten Tomatoes), audiences were less enthusiastic, also giving it a C+ CinemaScore.

In the limited release space, Lorne—a documentary about Lorne Michaels—earned $270,000 from 414 cinemas, while Mother Mary, directed by David Lowery and starring Anne Hathaway and Michaela Coel, made $168,063 from just five screens.

One indie comedy that did break into the top 10 was Busboys, featuring David Spade and Theo Von, which took eighth place with $1.6 million from 800 cinemas.

Compared to last year, when Sinners opened to $48 million, this weekend's totals are lower. However, the overall box office remains up more than 16% year-on-year, with Project Hail Mary credited as a major driver of that growth.

Looking ahead, the industry is anticipating a boost from Michael, due out next weekend. Early projections suggest it could open above $60 million, potentially surpassing the current musical biopic record held by Straight Outta Compton ($60 million opening). For comparison, Bohemian Rhapsody debuted with $50 million and ultimately grossed over $910 million worldwide.

HOROSCOPE

tarot.com

ARIES: Something at home needs your attention, and pushing through it won't work today. As the Moon moves through Cancer and squares Neptune, emotions can blur your usual clarity, especially around family or shared space.

TAURUS: The day starts with conversations that matter more than they seem. As the Moon moves into Cancer, everyday exchanges carry more feeling, and familiar interactions can land deeper than expected.

GEMINI: Get specific about what's actually worth your money and energy today. As the Moon moves into Cancer, your attention shifts to spending, priorities, and the habits tied to both.

CANCER: Cancer, your mood sets the tone today, so pay attention to it early. As the Moon moves into your sign, your sensitivity is higher, and your needs are clearer if you don't override them.

LEO: You may feel drained today, so pace yourself carefully. With the Moon in Cancer squaring Neptune, avoid overcommitting or chasing unclear ideas. Stay grounded, rest when needed, and focus on simple, manageable tasks instead.

VIRGO: Support shows up when you're clear about what actually needs to get done. As the Moon moves through Cancer, your focus shifts to friends, group dynamics, and shared goals.

LIBRA: What you say publicly carries extra weight today, so be precise. With the Moon in Cancer squaring Neptune, expectations may blur quickly, especially in work or shared responsibilities, making clear communication essential.

SCORPIO: You want something bigger, but you need to define what that actually is. As the Moon moves through Cancer, your attention shifts to growth, travel, or learning, but Neptune can blur what's realistic versus ideal.

SAGITTARIUS: Something deeper is surfacing, and avoiding it won't work today. With the Moon in Cancer squaring Neptune, emotions around intimacy, money, or shared responsibilities may tangle with expectations, making clarity and honesty essential.

CAPRICORN: A conversation with someone close can't stay vague today. As the Moon moves into Cancer, your focus shifts to one on one dynamics, and unspoken expectations can surface quickly. Don't assume alignment.

AQUARIUS: Something in your workflow isn't as clear as you think, and it will show today. As the Moon moves through Cancer and squares Neptune, tasks and communication can slip out of sync quickly.

PISCES: You need something light and creative today, not more pressure. As the Moon moves through Cancer, your focus shifts to play, creativity, and connection, but it only works if you let it stay simple.

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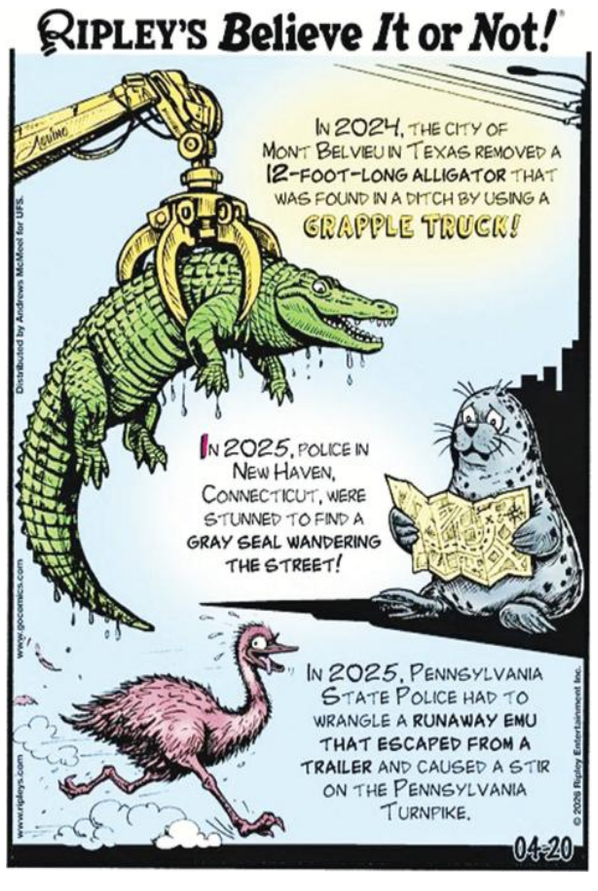

Nepal falter under lights as UAE clinch rain-hit opener

BY A STAFF REPORTER
KATHMANDU, April 20

Nepal's batting frailties were exposed under the floodlights at TU Cricket Ground on Monday evening as the hosts slumped to a six-wicket defeat to the United Arab Emirates in the opening T20I of the home series- their first international match played at night. Opting to bat first, Nepal managed only 122 for 8 in 18.5 overs before rain interrupted play. The revised target under the DLS method left UAE chasing 78 runs from 10 overs, which they achieved comfortably in 8.5 overs for the loss of four wickets. UAE skipper Muhammad Waseem led the charge with a blistering 33 off 15 balls, punishing Nepal's bowlers after being dropped by wicketkeeper Arjun Saud. His innings, studded with three fours and three sixes, set the tone before Sandeep Lamichhane struck to have him caught by Sher Malla in the fourth over.

Lamichhane continued to fight back, trapping Adeeb Usmani leg before and later dismissing Harpreet Singh to finish with figures of 3 for 23. However, his effort proved insufficient as Alishan Sharafu (18) and Akshdeep Nath (17 not out) guided UAE home with a composed partnership.

Kushal Malla claimed the other wicket but was expensive, conceding 15 runs from five balls. Debutant Hemant Dhami endured a tough start, leaking 20 runs in his solitary over. Earlier, Nepal's top order struggled against disciplined UAE bowling. Returning opener Arjun Saud, playing his first T20I since 2022, struck three boundaries before being bowled by Junaid Siddique for 13. Sundeep Jora followed cheaply, and Kushal Bhurtel was run out for 16 after a brief flourish. Kushal Malla, back in the national side, added 17 before falling lbw to Zuhaib Zubair, leaving skipper Dipendra Singh Airee to anchor the innings.

Airee top-scored with an unbeaten 32 off 35 balls, showing composure amid the collapse. He shared a 28-run stand with Basir Ahamad (14) before wickets tumbled again — Gulshan Jha (1), Nandan Yadav (13), and Sher Malla (0) all departing in quick succession. Lamichhane remained not out on 2 as Nepal's innings closed at 122. For UAE, Zuhaib Zubair was the pick of the bowlers with 3 for 29, while Siddique (2 for 18) and Haider Ali (1 for 32) provided strong support. Skipper Airee, leading Nepal's T20 side for the first time, admitted his team fell short with the bat. "The wicket was tricky and our batting didn't click," he said. "We'll regroup and look for a comeback in Tuesday's match." The fixture marked several milestones for Nepal- their first international under lights, coach Stuart Law's maiden home series since taking charge 13 months ago, and the debut of separate captains for T20 and ODI formats. With regulars Rohit Paudel, Sompal Kami, Karan KC, Lalit Rajbanshi, and Aasif Sheikh missing, the youthful side showed flashes of promise but lacked consistency. With the victory, UAE have levelled the head-to-head in T20Is, with both side have won six matches each.

PHOTO: CAN

Nepal's captain Dipendra Singh Airee batting against the UAE during the first match of Under the Lights T20I Series at TU Cricket Ground, Kirtipur, Monday.

History haunts Arsenal as City take control of title race

AFP
Manchester, Apr. 20

The spectre of a charging Manchester City haunts Arsenal once more after a 2-1 defeat at the Etihad Stadium on Sunday put a huge dent in the Gunners' hopes of a first Premier League title in 22 years.

Mikel Arteta's men remain on top of the table for now but could be knocked off their perch for the first time in 2026 when City, with a game in hand, visit doomed Burnley on Wednesday.

Arsenal had lost just three times in 49 games this season before last month's League Cup defeat to City.

But they have won just one of their past six games, including four consecutive defeats in domestic competitions, as they contemplate another trophyless season.

It is a case of history repeating itself for long-suffering Arsenal fans, who have seen their side finish second in the Premier League for the past three seasons.

In both the 2022/23 and 2023/24 campaigns, Pep Guardiola's relentless team reeled in Arteta's side while last season the Gunners finished behind a resurgent Liverpool.

Once again City have hit their stride when it matters most, just as Arsenal have run out of steam.

Guardiola has now won 31 of his 39 Premier League games in April as he eyes a seventh title during his decade in Manchester.

By contrast, Arteta has overseen just 11 victories in 27 April league fixtures during his six-and-a-half years in charge.

Arteta was keen to stress that fortune had not favoured his side in a game of fine margins at the Etihad.

While Arsenal clearly showed signs of nerves in losing at home to Bournemouth last weekend, they took the game to City and were undeterred by Rayan Cherki's brilliant opener.

Kai Havertz charged down Gianluigi Donnarumma's attempted clearance to level almost immediately and Arsenal had plenty of other chances.

Eberechi Eze's shot somehow came off the post and along the line rather than into the net when the score was 1-1 and Gabriel Magalhaes's deflected header also came off the post in a frantic finale.

PHOTO: AP

Manchester City's Erling Haaland celebrates after scoring his side's second goal during the English Premier League soccer match against Arsenal in England.

But Arsenal have only themselves to blame for repeated failings that have not been addressed.

Twice Havertz missed huge chances in the second half -- the German international failed to beat Donnarumma when one-on-one before heading over when unmarked deep into stoppage time.

Arteta fell to his knees in the technical area in despair.

After an injury-disrupted 18 months, Havertz was thrust into action for the full match as Arteta left Viktor Gyokeres on the bench until the final minutes.

The Swede was the man signed to solve Arsenal's need for a prolific number nine in last summer's transfer window.

Gyokeres is the club's top scorer with 18 goals in all competitions, but he has rarely looked as if he is the answer against top-quality opposition.

Ruthless City

Arteta admitted that City were sharper in attack. "We proved that we are there, but the reality is that in the two boxes there was a difference," said Arteta. "That's what we think is the difference between the two sides, the finishing in the boxes.

"There is an element of luck, there is an element of timing, of execution. There are a lot of things that have to be your way. "At the end, winning or not winning is going to come down to this moment. There are certain individual moments that you need in order to achieve what we want."

For Guardiola, Erling Haaland proved the value of a world-class striker.

The Norwegian had been well-marshalled in a bruising battle with Gabriel, but stole ahead of his marker to slot home the winning goal and his 47th for club and country this season.

"You can see the difference today on the field and those top players made a difference today," former Arsenal captain Patrick Vieira told Sky Sports.

"They will feel the pressure more now. I always question the mental strength of the team and I will question it more now regarding the result today."

INDIA CLASSED HIGH RISK FOR DOPING IN TRACK AND FIELD

AP
Monaco, Apr. 20

Track and field investigators have classed India as an "extremely high" risk for doping and imposed stricter testing on athletes from Botswana including a stellar men's sprint team ahead of the 2027 world championships.

The Athletics Integrity Unit announced its decisions Monday days after India — which is currently bidding for the 2036 Olympics — hosted World Anti-Doping Agency leaders who challenged the country to improve its poor record.

"The doping situation in India has been high-risk for a long time and, unfortunately, the quality of the domestic anti-doping program is simply not proportionate to the doping risk," the AIU's chairman David Howman said in a statement.

India has produced the most positive doping tests in track and field since 2024, the AIU said, and now will be subjected to stricter "minimum testing requirements for their national team athletes."

The list of highest-risk countries that India joins also included in 2025 Belarus, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russia and Ukraine.

Botswana, Cuba and Peru are classed as second-tier risks by the AIU and their athletes must now give at least three no-notice samples in training to be eligible for upcoming major events, including the worlds next year in Beijing.

Botswana runners also face increased testing before the country hosts the World Relays in Gaborone next month.

This was imposed because of "an inadequate response to repeated warnings about low testing levels, and an increase in performance at international level," Howman said.

The AIU operates independently from the World Athletics governing body and since 2019 has held member federations accountable for anti-doping programs operating in their nation.

How Bayern Munich won its 13th Bundesliga title in 14 years

AP
Berlin, Apr. 20

Bayern Munich wrapped up another Bundesliga title on Sunday, the club's 13th in 14 years, after a record-breaking season that could still get better.

The Bundesliga is just the first of a potential treble of trophies with Bayern next facing Bayer Leverkusen in the semifinals of the German Cup on Wednesday before it takes on defending champion Paris Saint-Germain in the semifinals of the Champions League.

The Bundesliga is seen within the club as the minimum target for the season and this is Bayern's record-extending 35th German championship. Apart from the first in 1932, when it was decided by regional champions in a knockout competition, all the others came after the Bundesliga's formation in 1963.

Bayern is always keen to assert its domestic dominance. Leverkusen's triumph in 2024 was an outlier that spurred Bayern to back-to–back titles and may be the start of another long run.

Bayern bounced back from the trauma of 2012 – when it lost the Champions League final in Munich to Chelsea, as well as the Bundesliga and German Cup final to Borussia Dortmund – by winning the Champions League, Bundesliga and German Cup treble the following season under Jupp Heynckes.

The Bundesliga this season is just the first step as Bayern chases another treble. Here's a closer look at how it was won:

Goals

Bayern smashed its own league record for goals scored in a season by clocking five against St. Pauli to take its tally to 105 goals last weekend. The previous record was 101 goals scored by Bayern's 1971-72 team featuring Franz Beckenbauer and Gerd Müller.

England forward Harry Kane was among the scorers in the title-clinching 4-2 win against Stuttgart on Sunday to extend the record to 109 goals. And there are still four rounds remaining.

Kane took his club tally for the season to 50 against Real Madrid in the Champions League semifinals. It's 51 now. He has 32 goals in 27 Bundesliga games so far.

New signing Luis Díaz chipped in 15 and Michael Olise has 12, but Bayern's goals came from all over the team with Leon Goretzka getting the record-breaking 102nd goal against St. Pauli.

Including the win over Stuttgart, Bayern scored four goals or more in 14 league games starting on the opening day with a 6-0 rout of Leipzig.

Rivals

Bayern again has no rival capable of challenging its dominance. Borussia Dortmund came closest this season but it was long clear it couldn't provide a match for Bayern, which ended any notions of a contest at the end of February by winning 3-2 in Dortmund.

"We have an 11-point advantage," Joshua Kimmich said at the time, "we're not going to give it away."

Dortmund opened the way for Bayern to clinch the title on Sunday by losing two consecutive games.

None of Stuttgart, Leipzig or Leverkusen could even keep up with Dortmund.

Kompany

Though he was far from first choice, Bayern coach Vincent Kompany has proven an inspired appointment for a team that was misfiring and underachieving with Thomas Tuchel.

In his second season at Bayern, Kompany has more than steadied the ship, promoting young players like Lennart Karl – who looks set to become a star – while thoughtfully rotating the squad to keep all his players involved and happy while minimizing the likelihood of injuries.

Kane has had his sights on breaking Robert Lewandowski's season record of 41 Bundesliga goals but Kompany decided to manage his star forward's playing time to rest him for key games in the Champions League and German Cup.

Kompany also earned praise for speaking up against racism after José Mourinho blamed Real Madrid star Vinícius Júnior for provoking the abuse he receives, and he welcomed the appointment of Marie-Louise Eta as the first female coach in the Bundesliga last week.

Kompany has brought harmony to Bayern, a club previously known as "FC Hollywood" for all the tabloid headlines it generated.

PHOTO: AP

Bayern Munich players celebrate after their team clinched the German league title after a Bundesliga soccer match against Stuttgart in Germany.

LYON DENT PSG'S LIGUE 1 TITLE HOPES

AFP
Paris, Apr. 20

Brazilian prodigy Endrick scored one goal and set up another as Lyon won 2-1 away to Paris Saint-Germain on Sunday, denting the reigning European champions' bid for another Ligue 1 title.

Endrick gave Lyon an early lead at the Parc des Princes and then released Afonso Moreira to double their advantage.

PSG rested several stars from the side that beat Liverpool away in midweek to reach the Champions League semi-finals and were far from their best, with Goncalo Ramos having a penalty saved before Khvicha Kvaratskhelia grabbed a late consolation.

It was a fifth defeat in Ligue 1 this season for Luis Enrique's side, who are one point ahead of nearest challengers Lens with a game in hand -- a win at home to Nantes in a rearranged fixture in midweek will leave them four points clear with five to play.

PSG must still travel next month to Lens, who beat Toulouse 3-2 on Friday, and remain on course for a fifth straight domestic title, but this remains a setback for a side preparing to face Bayern Munich in the Champions League semi-finals.

"You want a more close-fought league and you have it. Lens keep winning and it will be difficult until the end," said Luis Enrique.

"That's football and now we just need to prepare for the upcoming games. We are going to be playing every three days now and we need to cope with that."

Meanwhile, Lyon's win is a huge boost in their quest to return to the Champions League after an absence of six years from Europe's elite club competition -- since they lost to Bayern in the 2020 semis. Paulo Fonseca's side are joint-third on 54 points with Lille, who drew 0-0 with Nice on Saturday.

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