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TODAY

NATIONAL

There are some 200 displaced people living in shelters in Ghyangual of Helambu. Those who could afford have moved out but people who have nowhere else to go are left behind amid the risk of more disasters. **Pg 2**

Jack Ma, founder of tech conglomerate Alibaba and once the richest business leader in China, arrived in Kathmandu on Tuesday afternoon. He landed at the Kathmandu airport on a special flight at 2:30 pm. **Pg 3**

OPINION

Community forestry management policies should prioritise harvesting mature trees and using timber for various wood products rather than allowing trees to decay, says *Bijesh Mishra*. **Pg 4**



A weaver bird hovers close to its nest at Balkhu in Kathmandu on Monday.

POST PHOTO: HEMANTA SHRESTHA

Top court orders relief for conflict-era victims of torture and sexual violence

17 years since Peace Accord, torture victims lack adequate means to seek justice and hold perpetrators to account.

BINOD GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, JUNE 27

The Supreme Court has directed the government to include the victims of torture and sexual violence from the Maoist insurgency in its interim relief programme. Passing verdicts in two different writ petitions that challenged the 'discriminatory provisions' in the working procedure for relief distribution, a division of justices Sapana Pradhan Malla and Hari Prasad Phuyal on Monday concluded that the victims of the insurgency-era torture and sexual violence should not be excluded from the relief package.

Although successive governments have on different occasions brought various relief packages for conflict victims, those who faced torture and sexual violence at the hands of the state security forces or the Maoist insurgents have not received any relief from the government. Advocate Kashiram Dhungana, who represented the petitioners, said the court has done some justice to the victims who had so far been excluded from the government's relief programmes.

"The Supreme Court has issued a ruling as demanded by the petitioners. The government will have to provide relief to victims of torture and sexual violence although the details of the verdict will be known only after the court releases the full text of the verdict," he told the Post. It generally takes a few days to months for the court to issue full texts.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in its report says at least 2,500 inci-

dents of torture happened during the insurgency. Advocacy Forum, a non-governmental organisation working on human rights advocacy, recorded 1,251 cases of torture between 2001 and 2006 and most of them were committed by state actors.

In its annual report published on the occasion of the International Day against Torture on Monday, the forum said electric shocks, rape and various other forms of sexual abuse, burying people alive, depriving them of basic needs like food, water, and access to bathrooms, severe beatings with iron rods and bamboo sticks on their feet

UNHCR report says at least 2,500 incidents of torture happened during the insurgency.

and back, rolling wooden logs on thighs, pushing heads under water and death threats were the commonly used methods of torture applied by the state security forces during the insurgency. Similarly, the Maoist side also used some of the torture methods.

Seventeen years since the Comprehensive Peace Accord, torture victims lack adequate means to seek justice and hold perpetrators to account and are constantly being deprived of effective redresses, such as reparations, acknowledgment and truth, reads the report.

>> Continued on page 2

Seven held in Lalita Niwas land scam

Former election commissioner Shah and Bhatbhateni supermarket owner Gurung are among those caught.

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA & ANUP OJHA
KATHMANDU, JUNE 27

The Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) of Nepal Police has started arresting people allegedly involved in the forgery of government documents with the intent to transfer the ownership of government land located at Lalita Niwas, Baluwatar, in the name of private individuals.

The police said the CIB on Tuesday had arrested seven individuals including ex-election commissioner Sudhir Shah, owner of Bhatbhateni supermarket Min Bahadur Gurung and former government officials including Kaladhar Deuja, then chief of the Dillibazar Land Revenue Office.

The others arrested are Surendra Kapali, Dharma Prasad Gautam, Hupendra Mani KC and Gopal Karki.

Citing last year's Supreme Court order, the CIB, however, released Deuja, KC and Kapali later in the day.

The Supreme Court, on August 4 last year had issued an interim order to initiate investigations against them without detaining them.

"More arrests will follow," a CIB source told the Post. Except Gopal Karki, the other six are also defendants in a corruption case filed by the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) on February 5, 2020 in connection with the land scam.

CIB chief Additional Inspector General Kiran Bajracharya told the Post that seven people were arrested on Tuesday after the District Court, Kathmandu issued an arrest warrant against them at CIB's request. "They will be investigated for possible prosecution in connection with the

forgery of government documents," said Bajracharya. "We will consult the District Attorney Office, Kathmandu, to explore if any additional accusations apply."

Nearly a year and a half after the District Attorney Office, Kathmandu returned the investigation report to the CIB requesting further investigation, police have again started apprehending people on the charge of their involvement in the land grab scam.

Police said new arrests were made based on separate investigations against the persons involved in the forgery of government documents.

Police say new arrests were based on probe against persons charged with document forgery.

Even though the former election commissioner Shah was not made a defendant in the corruption case filed by the CIAA, his wife Urmila Shah was. The anti-graft body had filed cases against 175 people. Of them, 110 were accused of graft while 65 faced cases as the government sought to reclaim the lands illegally transferred.

Former deputy prime minister and minister for physical infrastructure and transport Bijay Kumar Gachhadar, and two former land reforms ministers Dambar Shrestha and Chandra Dev Joshi, along with three former government secretaries, are among those accused of corruption over the illegal transfer of government lands.

>> Continued on page 2

MONEY

Chinese Premier Li Qiang slammed efforts in the West to "de-risk" their economies as a "false proposition" on Tuesday, hitting back against US and EU policy aimed at reducing their reliance on China. **Pg 6**

SPORTS

Aashish Chaudhary struck late in the second half as Nepal defeated Pakistan 1-0 at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in their last Group A match to exit the SAFF Championship with a consolation win. **Pg 7**



CULTURE

In 'Charulata' and 'Savitri,' the women feel an emptiness in their lives and find ways to fill it up—daring to tread forbidden routes. For Savitri, it's relishing Navaraj's gaze as they sit across each other having lunch. **Pg 8**

Civil aviation boss hauled up over Yeti Airlines crash

Tourism ministry accuses the director general of consistently failing to ensure aviation safety, with five aircraft incidents and accidents on his watch.

SANGAM PRASAIN
KATHMANDU, JUNE 27

The Tourism Ministry has accused the civil aviation regulator of neglect resulting in the crash of Yeti Airlines Flight 691 last January. The ATR 72 plunged to the ground while coming in to land at newly opened Pokhara International Airport, killing all 72 persons on board.

At that time, experts had demanded a criminal investigation alleging that a serious crime and mass murder had taken place.

On Monday, Pradeep Adhikari, director general of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal, was hauled up by the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation and told to submit an explanation over the disaster.

"Adhikari has been asked to furnish clarification on nine points," said Rajendra Kumar KC, spokesman for the ministry. "We have given him seven days to do so."

The nine-point clarification note, which has gone viral, states that the



Pradeep Adhikari, director general of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal.

director general's actions violated government policy. He has been charged with misusing his position and failing in his duty.

The ministry has accused the director general of consistently failing to ensure aviation safety as there have been five aircraft incidents and acci-


dents on his watch, including two major disasters.

"As serious incidents and accidents continue to happen, the country is suffering losses, and serious questions are being raised about Nepal's aviation safety. As an accountable executive for the state safety programme, why shouldn't we charge you that you failed to fulfil your responsibility to make aviation safety effective?" the note stated.


"Without receiving the final report of the flight calibration and without completing all the preliminary preparations for the operation of the international airport, including the flight safety assessment, why did the test flight of the airport take place without receiving the report?" the note stated.

Adhikari has been asked to explain why he allowed a Himalaya Airlines Airbus A320 to land under visual flight rules at Pokhara International Airport during its inauguration on January 1, even though the airport had not been tested.

>> Continued on page 6




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OPINION



Creeping catastrophe

Over 20 percent of Nepalis above 15 suffer from hypertension and we are not doing much to control it.

Globally, the burden of high blood pressure, also called hypertension, is increasing. The same is the case here, as shown by the Nepal Demographic Health Survey-2022. The study found that over 20 percent of Nepalis above the age of 15 suffer from this condition. Untreated hypertension is a significant risk factor for potentially fatal health problems such as cardiovascular diseases (heart disease and stroke) that account for 17.9 million deaths each year. It can also result in chronic kidney disease, dementia, and arrhythmia. Countries around the world have, by 2030, pledged to cut hypertension rates by 33 percent. For this, several of them have policies to dissuade high intake of salt and saturated fat. Nepal too has increased taxes on the import of junk food and energy drinks; however, even with the increased prices, people are happily gulping them down. Alarmingly, 48 percent of women and 52 percent of men aged 15 and above with hypertension are not even aware they have the disease. This lack of awareness highlights a shortfall in efforts to prevent and control non-communicable diseases (NDCs) like hypertension.

Reducing incidents of hypertension calls for more than governmental effort. Medical research shows a clear link between cardiovascular diseases and lifestyle choices, stressing the importance of self-care through lifestyle changes. By giving up smoking, reducing stress, exercising, getting regular checkups and consuming nutritious foods, people can greatly improve their health and well-being.

Similarly, governments and health authorities must take steps for hypertension prevention, early detection, and effective diagnosis and control. People must be educated on the risks of high blood pressure, and hypertension screening should be a top priority. In Nepal, where 15.1 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, regular health check-ups may not be a feasible option for everyone. The larger trend is still for people to visit hospitals and healthcare centres only when they fall ill. Rather than only rely on occasional health camps, the goal should be to mobilise existing healthcare centres and volunteers for regular screenings at the local level. The same resources can be used to offer guidance on taking medication correctly and adopting a healthy lifestyle.

Although the mid-day meal provided in government schools is commendable, there are still many students who are deprived of high-quality and nutritious food. Private schools should also prioritise offering nutritious meals to their students. Giving young children healthy and nourishing food from an early age reduces their risk of developing hypertension, obesity and other non-communicable diseases. Concomitantly, false advertising of junk foods as nutritious foods must be restricted.

With an increasing focus on communicable diseases, the prevalence of NCDs has risen, resulting in 41 million annual deaths, or 74 percent of all deaths around the world, with 77 percent of deaths related to NCDs occurring in low- and middle-income countries. A 2021 WHO report also revealed that the majority of hypertension patients live in these countries. The situation right now is bad enough. If the state is not serious about controlling NCDs like hypertension even now, it could have a health catastrophe on its hands.

THEIR VIEW

Libraries for children

A single book read in a library may leave a lasting impression on a youngster.

It is locked and dark. Only old books are available. There are probably many school libraries like that. School libraries need to be developed into places where children can gather and encounter memorable books.

The funds that the central government grants to local governments to purchase books for public elementary and junior high schools are not being fully utilised. A total of ₹22 billion was granted in fiscal 2021, but only ₹12.6 billion was actually used to purchase books. Since the use of the funds is left to the discretion of local governments, it is believed that local governments put higher priority on the enhancement of social welfare programmes and information technology at schools. It is impossible to overlook the fact that funds that should have been allocated for the purchase of books are being used to pursue other policies.

As digitisation advances, society is inundated with a great deal of information. Reading activities are indispensable to acquire the abilities to judge the truth or falsity of information and to use information correctly. School libraries play increasingly important roles as places for inquiry-based learning that fosters the ability to think. Creating a reading environment for children is an investment in the future. The funds should be used for their original purpose, not just for immediate issues. The government may need to consider providing funds in the form of subsidies that can only be used for their designated purpose.

In some schools, old books stating that Germany is divided into East and West are still in place. Books must be sorted into those that should be kept and those that should be replaced. For this purpose, it is important to have school librarians and teachers with librarian certification who have expertise in books. They are expected to play such roles as accurately recommending books to children who come to the library saying, “I want to read an interesting book.”

It is not uncommon for school libraries to be closed for many hours because there is no school librarian on duty. School libraries also have a significant function as a place for children to spend time. Librarians may be able to detect unusual behavior in children who have worries. More school librarians and other staff should be assigned to make school libraries places where children can casually drop by.

Some schools have carpeted floors, manga comic books and low kotatsu tables equipped with heaters and blankets so that students can stretch their legs and read in comfort. Each municipality and school should make their own such efforts. Earlier this month, the lawmakers leagues for print culture and school libraries jointly adopted a resolution calling for better treatment of school librarians, many of whom are hired on a nonregular basis, and the improvement of books kept at school libraries. It is hoped that they will strengthen their efforts to lobby the central and local governments and lead to reforms.

A single book encountered at a library may be deeply engraved in the mind of a child and have a great impact on their life. All people concerned must share an appreciation of that life is.

— The Yomiuri Shimbun (Japan)/ANN

GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY

Local governments have prioritised education, health, agriculture, livestock and roads.

KHIM LAL DEVKOTA



Nepal’s metropolises, sub-metropolises and municipalities are required to present their budgets to their respective assemblies by June 25 every year, according to the provisions of the Local Government Operation Act and Inter-Governmental Fiscal Arrangement Act. These local governments have to provide detailed information about the revenue and expenditure of the previous fiscal year, revised income and expenditure for the current fiscal year, income and expenditure projections, and programmes and projects for the upcoming fiscal year. But 42 local governments have missed the deadline to present their annual financial plans, as per information provided by the local government associations.

Such failures have become a recurring phenomenon at some local levels, but it appears that the concerned authorities are not serious about identifying and addressing the underlying problem. As most representatives come from political parties, they do not show much concern towards this issue. When the budget is not passed on time, it hampers local economic activities, and as a consequence, people are unable to receive services as expected. Local employment and income are significantly affected, ultimately impacting the overall economic growth of the country.

Challenging task

Addressing all the issues related to the programmes and budgets is a challenging task. Based on six years of implementation experience at the local level, several problems can be pointed out. Despite these challenges, the local governments have presented their budgets.

Nepal can reduce rural poverty, balance trade and earn foreign currency through sustainable forest management.

BIJESH MISHRA



Nepal’s Community Forestry Programme (CFP) has achieved remarkable success in the restoration of forests that had depleted due to overgrazing, firewood collection, livestock forage and timber harvesting. The country nearly doubled its forest cover, reaching 46 percent of its land area in 2016 from 26 percent in 1992.

The International Food Policy Research Institute indicated the dual objectives of CFP as forest conservation and poverty reduction in Nepal. While the programme has made significant strides in forest conservation, it has yet to catch up in reducing poverty primarily due to the oversight of the potential economic benefits of community forests (CFs) during implementation. Consequently, the full potential of CFs and their products has been underutilised.

Furthermore, the dependence of Nepali society on forests has shifted from traditional use to construction materials, furniture and other home appliances. Data from the World Integrated Trade Solution reveals that Nepal imported wood worth approximately \$229,000 in 2019. The United Nations COMTRADE database further suggests that Nepal imported wood-related products amounting to \$75.96 million in 2021. These figures could rise if other wood-based products are accounted for.

In this article, I propose a new policy to address the economic shortfall of CFs and meet the market demand of wood and wood-based products. A newly proposed policy paradigm for CF management also holds great potential for restoring forests, conserving biodiversity and building resilience against climate change. It also aims to reduce Nepal’s reliance on imported wood, wood products, support local livelihoods, and strengthen the national economy. This can be achieved through a simple yet highly effective forest management policy intervention involving the perpetual cycle of tree planting or natural regeneration, management, harvesting and replanting. Although a tree cannot grow perpet-

Assessing local level budget



PHOTO: COURTESY OF KMC

They have allocated funds appropriately, prioritising sectors such as education, health, agriculture, livestock, roads, drinking water, cooperatives and irrigation. Notable transformations have occurred in the physical, social and economic sectors. Small-scale industries and businesses have thrived in both rural and urban areas. For instance, Dharan Municipality has announced the operation of turmeric and soap factories.

To address disparity between sons and daughters, the local units have incentivised parents to adopt family planning after the birth of a daughter. They provide insurance in the name of daughters and promote marriages with a 20-year age gap. Such programmes have been initiated at many local levels.

Several local levels have implemented higher education programmes for girls and women. To reduce domestic violence, they have distributed liquor cards and decreed that liquor stores must not remain open after 7 pm. They have also provided annual financial support to parents caring for individuals with disabilities, and imposed minimal taxes on factories and businesses operated by disabled persons.

In remote areas, local governments have launched campaigns to distribute social security allowances to households. During the Covid-19 outbreak, they performed exceptionally well in distributing relief by going door to door to ensure citizens’ safety.

Local governments have paid special attention to marginalised ethnic communities like Kusunda and Raute.

Scholarships and free education programmes have been provided to their children, including opportunities for higher education. Programmes aimed at improving social and economic conditions, such as eliminating untouchability, providing free education to marginalised Dalit communities, and promoting the concept of one household, one profession, one school, one garden, one pond and one playground have been implemented.

Raksirang Rural Municipality in Makwanpur district has announced gifting homes to people migrating from other areas. This programme marks a significant and ambitious milestone in the history of local governments in Nepal.

Kathmandu Metropolitan City has earmarked Rs100 million for the operation of a city hospital dedicated to providing healthcare for children. Lalitpur Metropolitan City has carried out a subsidy programme for those purchasing electric vehicles.

Biratnagar Metropolitan City has launched a programme to clean the tyres of public vehicles before they enter the city, prohibited the use of plastic bags, penalised littering, improved roads and operated mobile toilets. Bharatpur Metropolitan City has set a target to attract 200,000 foreign tourists during Bharatpur Visit Year 2024. The city has also started a programme to establish one model school in each ward. It has also consistently provided subsidies to dairy farmers at the rate of Rs3 per litre of milk.

Kathmandu Metropolitan City has the highest budget of Rs25.54 billion

while Birgunj has the lowest budget of Rs3.21 billion.

Significant improvements have been made in the teaching and learning activities of community schools. To discourage the migration of students from government schools to private English-medium schools, some local governments have implemented English-medium education in community schools. Incentive programmes like scholarships, free uniforms and midday meals have been implemented to encourage students from marginalised communities, including Dalits and indigenous groups, to attend school.

Some local governments have provided free ambulance services for home healthcare services by employing doctors and nurses, establishing vocational training centres in all wards, and introducing services like zero home delivery. Additionally, support has been provided for activities such as preventing loss of fertile land, promoting organic farming, providing vision, supporting farmers through agricultural inputs, and providing subsidies for milk production, vegetable and fruit farming, fish farming, and processing.

Pork barrel funds

Local governments with a low revenue base are facing challenges. More than two-thirds of their revenue come from federal grants. However, the allocation for fiscal equalisation grants has decreased by Rs13 billion compared to the previous year.

The more local governments invest in their revenue sources, the more their fiscal activities will grow. Along with the growth in fiscal activities, there will be changes in the entire economy, including employment generation. It is necessary to take this aspect seriously at the local level.

Just as the federal and provincial budgets allocate funds for constituency infrastructure development programmes, many local levels have allocated significant amounts of money in the names of the mayor, deputy mayor, chairman and deputy chairman. This practice of allocating pork barrel funds existed in the past. But this time, their justification is that if the federal and provincial governments can allocate funds in the name of parliamentarians, they can do the same. This reasoning is flawed because two wrongs do not make a right. A government that is closely connected to the people should set a good example instead of promoting unethical practices.

How do we manage community forests?

ually, its lifespan can span several hundred years. Trees experience rapid growth and accumulate timber volume during the early stages of their life cycle. However, the trees grow slowly as they age, leading to degradation and death and ultimately decompose as soil organic matter. Forest management aims to accelerate tree growth, allowing for the early harvest of mature trees that can produce high-quality timber. In a separate research, I found that well-managed forests grown for approximately 40 years by selectively harvesting mature trees and leaving a few trees as seed sources can produce 3.5 times more marketable timber than naturally grown forests.

The success of the CFP in Nepal over the last four decades since its beginning in 1978 suggests that community forests possess the potential to produce quality trees and supply timber to the domestic market. However, if mature

cient management, and inadequate returns. Selling timber and wood products from CFs would help recoup these investments, compensate for the higher management costs partially if not wholly, meet timber market demand, and contribute to poverty reduction—one of the CFP’s goals. Poverty reduction through CF can be particularly effective in hilly and mountainous regions with limited alternative income sources.

Harvesting trees creates space for new trees to grow, leading to environmental benefits such as carbon sequestration. Newly developed trees capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and convert it to woody biomass, which can be harvested as they mature. The conversion of wood into wood products ensures the long-term capturing of atmospheric carbon dioxide, thus, preventing its release into the atmosphere. This perpetual cycle of opening



POST FILE PHOTO

trees are left unharvested, their growth slows down, and the quality of timber deteriorates. The signs of deterioration are already visible in Nepal’s CFs, as evidenced by the decayed and hollow cores in harvested trees. The decline of timber can be prevented by harvesting mature trees while they are still growing and using harvested timber as construction materials, furniture and home appliances. Consequently, CF management policies should prioritise harvesting mature trees and using timber for various wood products rather than allowing trees to decay.

From an economic perspective, timber harvesting would increase the availability of Nepali timber in the revenue of community forests user groups (CFUGs), reduce wood imports and trade deficits and bolster foreign currency reserves. Nepal has invested over 40 years of time, land, capital, cash, and labour in CF management. The CFP engaged over 1.6 million households through more than 14,000 CFUGs.

Concerns have been raised on the long-term sustainability of CFs due to high capital and labour costs, ineffi-

space for new trees by harvesting and replanting facilitates rapid carbon sequestration, transforming sequestered carbon into usable wood products and repeating the new carbon sequestration cycle. These practices contribute to establishing sustainable and resilient forests in the face of climate change.

Effective CF management also plays a vital role in biodiversity conservation and the preservation of endangered biomes. Poor forest management can lead to biodiversity deterioration, further endangering the fragile ecosystems. Forest management extends beyond tree planting, harvesting and replanting—it encompasses systematic research, identification of endangered species, understanding their ecological niches and habitats, their role in the ecosystem, and safeguarding air, water, and wetlands.

Sound forest management policies and practices provide opportunities for systematically harvesting mature trees while ensuring the growth of new trees in harvested areas and protecting resources such as forests, land, water, air, biodiversity, and ecosystem balance.

It is important to clarify that this article proposes a policy perspective for CF management in Nepal. However, it is not intended as a one-fits-all solution for managing a diverse forest ecosystem in the country. I acknowledge the challenges of forest research, policy formulation, legal frameworks and regulations required to achieve the multifaceted objectives discussed in this article. Nevertheless, globally published research on sustainable forest management for timber production, climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration can serve as a foundation for forest management research in Nepal. The transfer and adaptation of research-based knowledge to meet the needs of a country are in practice globally.

Forest management policies implemented outside Nepal may not fully address the country’s unique social, economic, environmental and ecological needs. However, Nepal can adapt transferable knowledge, learn from its experiences and further research to meet its needs. Gradual implementation of liberal and sustainable forest management policies, based on research findings, can create opportunities for timber businesses in Nepal.

Modern forest management practices in the US, Australia, and Canada were adapted from European practices. India, for instance, established its national-level criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management policies in 1999 through a workshop involving national and international organisations. India piloted its sustainable forest management initiative in 2000 and has continuously modified its policy to meet its social, economic, environmental and ecological needs. Chinese forest management policies have also changed significantly over the past five decades. More than 80 percent of community-owned collective forests in China have been transferred to individual households, while state-managed forests focus on conservation and discourage exploitation.

The standard practices of planting or naturally regenerating, managing, harvesting and replanting forests are in practice globally, meeting timber and wood product demands. Bigger economies such as the United States and Europe import wood products from Asia and Africa and harvest timber from their planted forests to fulfil market demand. In Nepal’s case, harvesting trees from sustainably managed community forests and replanting them can be a viable strategy to fulfil its timber demand, reduce rural poverty, alleviate trade imbalances and preserve foreign currency reserves.

Mishra is an applied economist at Auburn University, USA.





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FOREX	
US Dollar	131.55
Euro	144.01
Pound Sterling	167.53
Swiss Franc	147.13
Australian Dollar	88
Canadian Dollar	100.04
Singapore Dollar	97.51
Japanese Yen (10)	9.16
Chinese Yuan	18.23
Saudi Arab Riyal	35.08
Qatari Riyal	36.11
Thai Bhat	3.73
UAE Dhiram	35.81
Malaysian Ringit	28.19
Korean Won (100)	10.11

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

SHARES	
Nepse (in percent)	2,186.36pts 2.67%
HIGHEST GAINERS	
NUBL 10	DDBL 10
HLI 10	NLBBL 10
GBLBS 10	LLBS 10
MODERATE GAINERS	
CHCL 0.19	SPIL 0.19
NMBHF1 0.19	SPC 0.11
EBLD86 0.11	NIFRA 0.04
MODERATE LOSERS	
MCHL -0.28	MPFL -0.28
UNL -0.22	UPPER -0.19
KPCL -0.13	SPL -0.04
HIGHEST LOSERS	
SIKLES -3.88	GBBD85 -3.08
RBCL -2.49	CBBD88 -1.91
BHL -1.69	EHPL -1.66

BULLION		PRICE PER TOLA
 Fine Gold		Rs 110,600
 Silver		Rs 1,375
SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA		

■ BIZLINE

Nabil Bank wins Infosys Finacle Innovation Award

KATHMANDU: Nabil Bank Limited has been selected the Platinum Award in Infosys Finacle Innovation Award 2023 under the Product Innovation Category for the Launch of nBank. Nabil Bank was selected as the winner out of over 200 nominations across 10 categories. Gyanendra Prasad Dhungana, CEO of the bank, stated that the award has exemplified the unwavering dedication of the bank to ‘inspire better banking’ with innovative strategies. He further said that the bank is committed to creating unparalleled value for its customers, employees, investors, and the wider community. nBank, Nabil Bank’s mobile banking platform, is the first in Nepal to provide a completely digital banking experience to customers without having to fill out a single physical form or visit any branch.

France tests hypersonic glider for first time

PARIS: France has for the first time tested a hypersonic glide vehicle, a warhead that defies interception thanks to its unpredictable trajectory, a source with knowledge of the test said Tuesday. The speed of HGVs can exceed Mach 5, or 6,000 kilometres per hour (3,730 mph). The technology is being developed or deployed by a small number of countries that includes China, Russia and the United States. The French glider, called V-Max, was launched from a sounding rocket—which allows precise measurements—that went airborne in southern France late Monday, the source told AFP. France issued a warning notice covering a corridor of around 2,000 kilometres (1,240 miles) for air and sea traffic ahead of the launch. Local media reported that white traces in the sky were visible from the ground Monday night. (AFP)

China censors prominent journalist who raised concerns about economy

BEIJING: A prominent Chinese financial journalist who has compared the country’s economic problems to the Great Depression has been banned from social media. The Weibo account of Wu Xiaobo, an influential business journalist and author with more than 4.7 million followers, “is currently in a banned state due to violation of relevant laws and regulations”, according to a banner displayed on his page on Tuesday. Content moderators on Weibo—a Twitter-like platform—said on Monday they had blocked three verified users for “spreading smears against the development of the securities market” and “hyping up the unemployment rate”. Weibo did not give the full usernames of the blocked accounts, but said one of them had a three-character name starting with “Wu” and ending with “Bo”. China’s post-Covid economic recovery has faltered, with lacklustre data in recent weeks signalling that the rebound is running out of steam. (AFP)

Civil aviation chief accused of misusing position

>> Continued from page 1

“As the head of the regulatory body, why and how did you conduct such an extremely negligent act that adversely affects flight safety?” the note said. Adhikari had planned to fly the prime minister on the Airbus on a test flight.

Experts had raised a serious question stating that with the prime minister on board, the flight would have been a blunder, a crime. This was prevented by Himalaya Airlines Vice-President Vijay Shrestha who “refused to fly the prime minister”.

It has been revealed that this was not the first case of neglect.

The civil aviation body, which currently wears two hats—as regulator and service provider—had flown dozens of journalists, government officials and other dignitaries on a test flight during the opening of the Bhairahawa airport on May 16, 2022. It later described the trip as a “demo flight”.

Several unnamed experts told the Post that the civil aviation body has been misusing its authority, but no one wants to speak against it for fear of retribution.

The new international airport in Pokhara was hastily inaugurated and operated without adequate preparations to meet the January 1 project deadline.

Flight calibration, which tests all pieces of equipment at the new airport, had not recommended landing from the west. Yeti Airlines Flight 691 crashed while trying to do so.

The flight procedure had not been published, and airlines had very little information about airport procedures and data.

An evaluation as required by the “safety management system” was not carried out, neither by the civil aviation regulator, as service provider, nor by the airlines,” according to a former chief of the civil aviation body.

Russian lawyer David Kukhalashvili, representing the interests of the family of one of the Russian passengers who was killed in the Yeti Airlines crash, wrote to the Post that they were preparing to file a case, together with leading US and EU-based law firms, with the French court against the ATR 72 manufacturer, Yeti Airlines and the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal.

Kukhalashvili has won a similar case relating to an ATR 72 crash in Russia in 2012.

“The families have the right to get



POST FILE PHOTO

Flight calibration, which tests all pieces of equipment at the new Pokhara airport, had not recommended landing from the west.

more compensation by filing the claim in the French court. By filing the claim to the French court there will be a possibility to recover for them much more compensation. This is what we are going to do with regard to the families of Russian passengers,” he wrote to the Post. “I want to bring this info to the Nepali families, they can also join our class action claim.”

According to an official at the Tourism Ministry, the Russian lawyers have asked for the necessary documents through the Foreign Ministry. Questions about Nepal’s aviation have been raised for decades as the civil aviation body has been performing a dual role.

Global aviation watchdogs have questioned the civil aviation body’s dual role and urged Nepal to split the organisation into two entities—service provider and regulator—to enhance the safety of flyers.

But the government has shown no interest in doing so, and Nepal’s aviation industry is suffering the consequences.

Ministry officials say that Director General Adhikari has been speaking at various forums against the government’s decision to split the aviation regulatory body, which is one of the conditions for Nepal to be struck off the air safety list.

Sources say Adhikari has been forcing former director generals of the civil aviation body, aviation experts and media persons to lobby not to break up the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal.

In the clarification note, the ministry has accused Adhikari of not only flouting the policy of the government of Nepal but even challenging it.

Speaking at an event in Pokhara last year, Adhikari had said that he was the “state” and his decision would be final.

A Tourism Ministry official told the Post that Tourism Minister Sudan Kiranti has taken the initiative to register in Parliament the civil aviation bills that will separate the civil aviation body after his predecessors—Prem Ale and Jeevan Ram Shrestha—

showed no interest in getting them passed. The bill was tabled at the Cabinet two weeks ago but it hasn’t been passed.

The Cabinet is expected to pass the bills on Tuesday, according to Tourism Ministry officials.

An official at the civil aviation body told the Post that in-house trade unions were preparing to launch a protest against the government’s move to pass the bills.

“They are ready to hold a protest as soon as the bills are registered in Parliament,” said an official at the civil aviation body.

The Post has obtained an unsigned copy of the statement made two weeks ago which contains the plan of the five trade unions to launch the protest. In the statement, the unions have referred to the government as the “mafia”.

Last August, in the final report of the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) conducted in April of the same year, the United Nations International Civil Aviation

Climate protesters target TotalEnergies’ headquarters

■ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON, JUNE 27

Climate change campaigners targeted the UK headquarters of oil giant TotalEnergies with paint Tuesday, protesting the French firm’s alleged human rights violations in the construction of a contentious oil pipeline in Uganda.

Supporters of the Just Stop Oil activist organisation sprayed black paint in the lobby of the company’s headquarters in London’s Canary Wharf district, while others daubed orange paint outside, the protest group said. Dozens of students from a pressure group opposed to the building of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) also massed outside the building during the stunt to show support, it added.

London’s Metropolitan police said officers had arrested 27 people “for a combination of suspicion of criminal damage and aggravated trespass”.

TotalEnergies said in a statement

that it “fully respects the right to demonstrate and freedom of expression, but deplores all forms of violence, whether verbal, physical or material”. “TotalEnergies promotes transparent and constructive dialogue with all its stakeholders,” it added.

The French company is the largest shareholder in the controversial east African venture, which is set to carry crude oil to the Tanzanian coast through several Ugandan protected nature reserves.

Communities in the region claim the energy firm and other EACOP backers have caused serious harm to their rights to land and food in building the 1,500-kilometre (930-mile) pipeline. Critics have also called the project a “carbon bomb” which would release over 379 million tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere.

Just Stop Oil wants the UK and other governments to end all new oil and gas exploration and has promised not to let up in its high-profile protests until it does so.

Indigenous defenders of oil in the Amazon

■ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ISHPINGO (ECUADOR), JUNE 27

A group of Indigenous Waorani women give a war cry warning that environmentalists are not welcome in their part of the Ecuadoran Amazon, where an oil field operates partly on a protected reserve.

“We will not allow ‘kowori’ (strangers)... to enter,” said Waorani leader Felipe Ima, translating the belligerent words of the group of seven women from the Kawymeno community that supports oil extraction at the nearby Ishpingo field.

The community is pitted in a battle of wills against environmental group Yasunidos, which has been fighting for a decade for a referendum on leaving the oil underground.

In May, Ecuador’s Constitutional Court allowed the request, and a plebiscite has been scheduled for August.

Escorted by a spear-wielding warrior, the women from Kawymeno hold hands and dance in little clothing and feather crowns at the entrance to Ishpingo A platform.

They demand that any consultation should be with “the owners” of the land, and not with anyone that is “not even from the territory,” explained Ima.

In Ecuador, the Constitution recognizes Indigenous people’s “collective ownership of land as an ancestral form of territorial organization.”

The State, however, maintains control over anything under the soil.

Ishpingo together with the nearby fields of Tiputini and Tambococha form the so-called ITT

block, or block 43, which holds an estimated 282 million of the South American country’s proven crude reserves of 1.2 billion barrels.

Extraction at Tiputini and Tambococha start-

ed in 2016 after years of fraught debate over whether to drill inside the Yasuni National Park.

This came after the government of then-president Rafael Correa failed to persuade the inter-



AFP/RSS

Aerial picture of the Ishpingo oil platform of state-owned Petroecuador in Yasuni National Park, northeastern Ecuador.

Nepal already looking to future despite SAFF heartbreak

Painful elimination aside, the emergence of a new crop of players such as Laken Limbu and Awash Lamichhane promises a new dawn for Nepali football.

DIL KUMAR ALE MAGAR
KATHMANDU, JUNE 27

Nepal saw off Pakistan 1-0 in their last group match in Bengaluru on Tuesday to cap off their SAFF Championship 2023 journey with a consolation victory.

Nepal had already crashed out of the biennial competition following their 3-1 loss to Kuwait and 2-0 defeat against India in their previous fixtures.

Coach Vincenzo Alberto Annese's side were missing Anjan Bista—Nepal's second highest goal scorer—due to an injury which he suffered during the India clash. But Aashish Chaudhary filled that void as he came off the bench and ensured Nepal return home with at least a victory with an unstoppable half-volley late in the second half after Laken Limbu perfectly laid the ball for him. It was Chaudhary's first international goal for Nepal.

It is the first time since 2015 Nepal have failed to reach the semi-finals of a SAFF competition. But the Gorkhalis will still travel back home already looking to the future. Despite the painful exit, the emergence of a new crop of players promises a new dawn in the Nepali football.

Nepal reached their first ever SAFF Championship final in 2021 and that had already raised hopes that their long wait for the SAFF trophy could be coming soon. But things have gone the other way.

Most of the players including Suman Aryal, Tej Tamang, Dinesh Rajbanshi, Sujal Shrestha, Ranjit Dhimal, Gautam Shrestha, Bishal Rai, Sunil Bal and Santosh Tamang from Nepal's historic campaign in the Maldives two years ago have left the country seeking better future.

That left Annese with no choice but to call up a young squad for the SAFF



PHOTO: COURTESY OF SAFF

Aashish Chaudhary (centre) struck late in the second half as Nepal beat Pakistan 1-0 in Bengaluru in their last Group A match on Tuesday to exit the SAFF Championship with a consolation win.

campaign. More than a dozen players—Deep Karki, Nabin Lama, Sanish Shrestha, Dipak Raj Singh Thakuri, Aashish Chaudhary, Awash Lamichhane, Nishant Khadka, Bishal Shrestha, Mani Kumar Lama, Bimal Pandey, Laken Limbu and Simanta Thapa—were heading to India carrying less than five caps.

“We have a young team,” coach Annese had said after the Kuwait match. “Ayush Ghalan, Awash Lamichhane and the other boys are only 20, or 21 years old. I think Nepal have a bright future if the players stay in the country.”

Besides, the national team had less than 10 days to prepare for the competition due to the Martyrs

Memorial ‘A’ Division League.

Nepal were also drawn in a group of death [Group A] that featured the likes of seasoned opponents in record-eight time champions and holders India and Kuwait.

Yet, the young guns put up a spirited display that almost floored India at their home and there are a lot of positives to take from Bengaluru.

Ghalan, 19, came on as a second-half substitute after Kuwait had punished Nepal for their dismal performance with a 2-0 first-half lead in the opening game and his presence immediately changed dynamics of Nepali attack, with Bista finding the target for his 12th international goal and Nepal's only third goal overall against Kuwait

in their ten meetings. Bista, 25, is at his prime and will be aiming to move alongside Hari Khadka and Nirajan Rayamajhi in the all-time scoring chart for Nepal in the coming days.

Limbu—who made his debut in Nepal's friendly against the Philippines on the eve of the SAFF—started all three matches. He is just 20 and has already established himself as a key playmaker in the midfield alongside Nabin Lama. Defender Shrestha, 20, is a regular at the back alongside Ananta Tamang and Rohit Chand and remained a key to Nepal's solid defence against India. Lamichhane is also among Annese's top choices and played for 45 minutes after the restart in the India game

after coming on as an 83rd minute substitute against Kuwait.

The 21-year-old Manish Dang, who began his youth career in South Korea, has proved himself on key occasions.

Chaudhary was a second-half substitute in the Kuwait match but did not play a single minute against India. But against Pakistan, he was a hero. Chaudhary was also a top scorer alongside Bista for Martyrs Memorial ‘A’ Division League champions Church Boys United.

Annese's team, formed around the next generation, could not progress to the next stage but have had invaluable experience. And they look more than ready to take over the reins.

SAFF CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

RESULTS	
Nepal	1-0 Pakistan
Aashish Chaudhary 80	
India	1-1 Kuwait
Sunil Chhetri 45+2'	Anwar Ali 90+2' (OG)

GROUP A							
TEAM	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	PT
Kuwait	3	2	1	0	8	2	7
India	3	2	1	0	7	1	7
Nepal	3	1	0	2	2	5	3
Pakistan	3	0	0	3	0	9	0

GROUP B							
TEAM	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	PT
Lebanon	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
Bangladesh	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Maldives	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Bhutan	2	0	0	2	1	6	0

PLAYING WEDNESDAY	
Lebanon vs Maldives, 15:45 NST	
Butan vs Bangladesh, 19:45 NST	

ICC WORLD CUP QUALIFIER

GROUP B/QUEENS SPORTS CLUB
TOSS: Scotland, field first
Sri Lanka 245-10 (49.3/50 overs)
Pathum Nissanka 75 (85),
Charith Asalanka 63 (65)
Chris Greaves 6.3-0-32-4, Mark Watt 10-0-52-3
Scotland 163-10 (29/50 overs)
Chris Greaves 56* (41)
Maheesh Theekshana 10-0-41-3,
Wanindu Hasaranga 6-0-42-2
Sri Lanka win by 82 runs
Player of the match: Maheesh Theekshana

GROUP B/BULAWAYO ATHLETIC CLUB
TOSS: United Arab Emirates, field first.
Ireland 349-4 (50/50 overs)
Paul Stirling 162 (134), Andy Balbirnie 66 (88),
Harry Tector 57 (33)/Sanchit Sharma 7-0-46-3
United Arab Emirates 211-10 (39/50 overs)
Muhammad Waseem 45 (32),
Sanchit Sharma 44 (54)
Andy McBrine 7-1-34-2,
George Dockrell 6-0-32-2
Ireland win by 138 runs
Player of the match: Paul Stirling

TABLE/GROUP B					
TEAM	P	W	L	PT	NRR
Sri Lanka	4	4	0	8	3.047
Scotland	4	3	1	6	0.540
Oman	4	2	2	4	-1.221
Ireland	4	1	3	2	-0.061
UAE	4	0	4	0	-2.249

SUPER SIX FIXTURES	
June 29	Zimbabwe vs Oman
June 30	Sri Lanka vs Netherlands
July 1	Scotland vs West Indies
July 2	Zimbabwe vs Sri Lanka
July 3	Netherlands vs Oman
July 4	Zimbabwe vs Scotland
July 5	West Indies vs Oman
July 6	Scotland vs Netherlands
July 7	Sri Lanka vs West Indies
July 9	Final

Sri Lanka down Scotland to bolster Cricket World Cup hopes



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ICC

Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga (centre) celebrates after dismissing Christopher McBride of Scotland during the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier in Bulawayo on Tuesday.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BULAWAYO, JUNE 27

Sri Lanka defeated Scotland by 82 runs Tuesday to advance to the Super Six stage of the Cricket World Cup qualifiers with maximum points, while Ireland secured a consolation win over the United Arab Emirates.

Opener Pathum Nissanka made 75 and Charith Asalanka scored 63 as Sri Lanka were bowled out for 245 in Bulawayo, with Scotland spinners Chris Greaves (4-32) and Mark Watt (3-52) combining for seven wickets.

Scotland slid to 73-5 in reply and were eventually dismissed for just 163 after two run outs in the same over sealed their fate despite an enterprising 56 not out from Greaves.

Sri Lanka, the 1996 champions, go through as winners of Group B and will start on four points in the next round ahead of matches against the Netherlands, Zimbabwe and the West Indies.

Scotland carry over two points following Sunday's win over Oman, the third team to qualify from the section.

The next phase of the tournament begins Thursday when hosts Zimbabwe play Oman. The top two finishers in the Super Six will qualify for the World Cup in India in October and November.

Paul Stirling clubbed 162 off 134 balls as Ireland romped to a 138-run victory over the UAE in the other group game between two eliminated nations.

Stirling's knock comprised 15 fours and eight sixes but arrived too late for an Ireland side who lost their first three matches in Zimbabwe.

Captain Andy Balbirnie added 66 and Harry Tector struck a breezy 57 to lift Ireland to a total of 349-4 after they were put in to bat.

UAE skipper Muhammad Waseem made 45 before he was bizarrely run out after wandering out of the crease having been hit on the gloves.

His wicket triggered a collapse that spelled the end of the UAE's hopes despite resistance from Basil Hameed (39) and Sanchit Sharma (44) as they were all out for 211.

Ireland and the UAE head into the play-offs for seventh to 10th place with the United States and Nepal.

HOROSCOPE



ARIES (March 21-April 19)

You're in a grounded yet serious mood. Release any stress, grief, or drama you'd rather not hold onto. Nurture your most intimate dynamics through the art of conversation and emotional exchange. Maintain reasonable boundaries without closing off.



CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Your confidence is boosted. Try not to give your focus to anyone who might rain on your parade. A burst of auspicious energy marks the perfect excuse to be bold. Value your worth and request to be treated accordingly.



LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

Appreciate the beauty that surrounds you. Move slowly and embrace your mind, body, and soul. New opportunities could emerge in your career, so be sure to lead from a place of professional competency. A new admirer may reveal themselves.



CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)

You should feel loved and supported by your community. Showcase your work as people will be eager to lift you. Create stable foundations within your social sphere, especially when you operate with grace. Release emotions that don't serve you.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

Today brings a flirty vibe to the table that's perfect for striking up a conversation with your latest crush. Lead with an open heart, introduce yourself to new friends, and appreciate the ones you love. Your heart will heal.



LEO (July 23-August 22)

Get in touch with your emotions. Try not to fight tears if you're in need of a good cry. Step into roles or opportunities you've been building toward behind the scenes. Strengthen your connection with your self and honour your spirituality.



SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

Lead with an open heart, and your intuition will also benefit from a boost when you engage the mystic within. Be sure to fight for your hopes and dreams. Your views around work are adjusted for your success.



AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)

Follow your heart in professional matters. Operate in the spirit of teamwork and community. Invest in your health and the pursuit of success. Remember that stability comes to those who prioritize balance and create healthy expectations for themselves.



GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

You wake up feeling energised. Though you may not get immediate recognition for your efforts, the work you do now will pay off later. Themes around teamwork will come, providing a stabilizing energy. Don't be afraid to speak honestly.



VIRGO (August 23-September 22)

Bring thoughtfulness to your words, especially where intimate relationships, new connections, and business matters are concerned. Let down guards at a comfortable pace. Cleanse your energy and let go of any baggage you're ready to release.



SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

You're in a secretive mood. Make time for solitude and look for ways to nurture your heart, body, and mind. Confide in your most trusted allies. This energy will help you peel back the layers in relationships.



PISCES (February 19-March 20)

Be sure to operate from a place of faith while keeping an open mind. Implement healthy structures that will boost your confidence on the path toward success. Invest in yourself while implementing healthy habits and living mindfully.

ASTROLOGY.COM

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- Felony
- Passenger
- Sass
- Thin-shelled nut
- Kind of acid
- Rollover subj.
- Dislike intensely
- Violet flower
- Fleur-de- —
- Due
- Pile up, as wealth
- Got in a fight
- Plattitude
- Peddled anew
- Bedouin's mount
- Mr. Klempere
- Mushers' conveyances
- Genghis —
- Ancient ointment
- Explorer —
- Helen Johnson
- Robin Cook thriller
- Trim a photo
- Bard's forte
- Obligation
- Anesthetized
- point (nadir)
- "Ode to — Joe"
- Epic journey
- Flee to the J.P.
- Slot machine city

- Brownish fruit
- Treat a muscle pull
- Canine, maybe
- Yes, to Miss Piggy
- Jazzman — Blake
- Big Bird colleague
- Truck mkr.
- Golf's "Slammin' Sammy"
- Large

DOWN

- Books pro
- Dixie fighter
- I, to Wolfgang
- "Little Red Book" author
- Register
- Part of REM
- Mrs. Bowie
- Slight flaw
- Jr. naval officer
- "Casino —"
- Soft purple
- South Bend team
- Out-of-date
- Takes the plunge
- Jerseys (2 wds.)
- Unbroken horse
- Fix the roof
- Houston player
- Paper source (2 wds.)

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

O	W	L	S	W	A	T	C	H	S	A	S	H	
C	H	A	P	O	H	A	R	E	H	U	L	A	
T	I	K	I	R	A	V	E	L	O	D	O	R	
O	M	E	G	A	S	A	L	A	R	I	E	D	
R	O	U	T	I	N	E	S	K	I	M	P	S	
A	L	L	S	E	A	L	S	H	E	A	R	T	
D	I	N	D	R	A	M	S	H	E	A	R	T	
A	V	A	I	L	S	P	A	C	E	A	N	A	
R	E	S	C	U	E	S	H	E	L	L	E	D	
G	A	L	L	U	S	E	S	O	S	P	R	E	Y
A	S	I	A	T	R	A	I	N	T	A	D	A	
T	H	E	N	E	V	A	D	E	O	P	A	L	
S	E	N	D	E	R	E	B	A	R	N	A	M	

7-1-23

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- 1 in. = 2.54 —
- Mr. Chavez
- Economist — Smith
- Folk wisdom
- Perfects one's skills
- Entertain
- Bad-tempered
- JFK followed him
- Swit co-star
- Daughters' cousins
- Half-shell item

- Obfuscate
- Hip bone
- Sound reasoning
- Eyed rudely
- Intuition
- Essay byline
- Horde member
- Galleon cargo
- Lennon's wife
- Cratchit's son
- "Psst!"

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10		11	12	13		
14						15						16				
17						18						19				
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24	25	26	27						28							
29							30	31								
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39							40					41				
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50	51	52							53							
54							55	56								
57						58	59					60	61	62	63	64
65						66						67				
68						69						70				

SUDOKU

6	3	2	5	1	8	4	7	9
5	8	1	4	9	7	6	2	3
7	9	4	3	2	6	1	5	8
2	7	5	9	4	1	3	8	6
9	1	6	8	5	3	2	4	7
8	4	3	7	6	2	5	9	1
4	2	8	1	3	9	7	6	5
1	6	9	2	7	5	8	3	4
3	5	7	6	8	4	9	1	2

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

			3	1			2	5
							4	8
4						1		3
1		2			6		7	
				9				
	9		8			5		1
6		9						4
7	3							
	1	4			2	6		

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

‘Savitri’ blurs the line between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ woman

Sujit Bidari’s short film explores the emotions of a married woman who falls in love with a voice on the radio.



SCREENGRAB VIA FACEBOOK

URZA ACHARYA
KATHMANDU

Savitri is a typist. Her job is to type out poems of the *shringar ras*—literature that focuses on beauty and romance—for them to be read out loud on Radio Nepal. And as she types (and later hears) these romantic verses—in these dry months, please come replenish me—she falls in love with the voice that recites them. The voice is her co-worker Navaraj’s. And Savitri is married.

‘Savitri’ is a short film by Sujit Bidari, also known for directing ‘Ainaa Jhyal Ko Putali,’ Nepal’s 2022 Oscar submission. It is based on a short story, ‘Typist,’ by writer Bhawani Bhikshu. Bhikshu’s story, which is set in the year 1995, is refreshingly modern, especially in the way it views female sexuality. Not only is the married heroine attracted to a co-worker, but she is also shown to be disenchanted by her husband, longing instead to hear the soothing

voice on the radio reciting love poems.

The story and film remind me of the rare instances where feminine desires were portrayed poignantly. Parallels can be drawn to Satyajit Ray’s ‘Charulata’—a film about a beautiful, intelligent but lonely wife of a newspaper editor. Charulata has everything she needs—plenty of servants at her ser-

vice; a big, gorgeous home; a loving but aloof husband—but longs for connection, one that matches her interest and intelligence. She finds that connection with her brother-in-law, Amar, who is about the same age as her. Both are rather fond of literature, and Charu develops feelings for Amar.

In ‘Charulata’ and ‘Savitri,’ the women feel an emptiness in their lives and find

ways to fill it up—daring to tread forbidden routes. For Savitri, it’s relishing Navaraj’s lingering gaze as they sit across each other while having lunch. Her words continually dismiss any possibility of an affair between Navaraj and her, especially when her friend Manju constantly teases her—but her eyes are a bit more daring.

As her love for the voice on the radio grows, she is thwarted by the advances by her husband. Moreover, his current unemployment and dependence on her for money is also a cause for annoyance for Savitri (which hints at the monetary expectations men are subjected to). It is not difficult to see that the marriage was possibly an arranged one, and she wishes for a more romantic partner—perhaps one that will recite poems for her.

Films (and literature) in the past have always stuck to the idea of the eternal feminine—a narrative that claims women have inherent values of nurturing, sacrifice, innocence and purity. This manifests in

tion of motherhood or the all-forgiving, devoted wife/girlfriend. Similarly, the heroines are always passive receivers of romance, rarely shown to initiate anything by themselves.

What ‘Savitri’ and ‘Charulata’ do is portray women beyond the ‘eternal feminine’ trope and hint at the complex emotions and thought processes they go through—as human beings do. Moreover, the films also take a more neutral stance in depicting the women—they aren’t villainised for having such emotions or seen as destroying familial values.

In films, there is a tendency to show women who actively pursue romance or express desires as the ‘femme fatale’—a seductress that will take any route to have the man she wants. This character is almost always juxtaposed with the more conventional heroine, who is pure and innocent. That sort of binary—and the subsequent triumph of the ‘good’ heroine over the femme fatale—reflects the anxieties around feminine values, where

‘Savitri’ and ‘Charulata’ portray women beyond the ‘eternal feminine’ trope and hint at the complex thought processes they go through.

women who are expressive are seen as a threat to patriarchal norms. A 2017 book titled ‘Bad Girls and Transgressive Women in Popular Television, Fiction, and Film’ argues that films show “women [who are] be passive, voiceless, and powerless—worthy of praise—or vengeful, violent, promiscuous, disruptive—[as] requiring restraint.”

However, it is important to note that the femme fatale has been reclaimed (by feminist writers and filmmakers) to break the mould and portray heroines beyond their sex appeal, like in ‘Jennifer’s Body’ and, more recently, ‘Promising Young Woman.’

Though ‘Savitri’ and ‘Charulata’ do not carry the typical grandiose of the femme fatale, it can be argued they are a more toned down and realistic approach to the femme fatale—in the sense that both Savitri and Charulata show instances of sexual autonomy and harbour conflicting (and perhaps even immoral) emotions. This is refreshing to see on screen.

The films don’t glorify infidelity or sit back as the women become total anarchists (not that I’ll complain if such movies are made). In fact, the endings of both films are quite realistic. But in a world where women are reduced to the ‘damsel-in-distress,’ ‘the manic-pixie-dream-girl’ or the ‘crazy-ex-girlfriend,’ any inkling of a sincere portrayal feels surprisingly warm.

Savitri	
Language:	Nepali
Duration:	14 minutes
Director:	Sujit Bidari
Cast:	Keki Adhikari, Dipesh Bhandari, Manju Devkota
Released:	2013

A simpler approach to fitness

Ojash Joshi, a trainer at OxStength, talks about his fitness journey and the reasons behind a surge in the numbers of gym-goers in the Valley.



ANISH GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU

Ojash Charan Joshi has always loved working out. From playing sports as a child to training for body-building competitions, he loves to get his heartbeat pumping. So when he saw a gym for the first time, he was transfixed. But gyms were expensive. He worked mundane jobs to pay the gym fee.



One day out of the blue, he saw an opening for an internship at The Physique Workshop. The opportunity was colossal for him as he could learn, train, and take free classes with fitness instructors. From there, his physical and personal growth took off. His shyness began to wear off as he developed social and communication skills. With time, he realised what he was truly capable of.

Joshi gives huge credit to the people around him who played their part in his growth. When he came across Mr Kathmandu Junior, an annual bodybuilding competition, he resolved to participate in the under-21 category. He trained ferociously. “I ended up winning. My team and mother came around and congratulated me, which I will never forget,” he recalls. For him, a proper physique is the result of discipline and consistency.

Joshi is now a trainer. He currently works at the OxStrength online fitness coaching platform, focusing on power building.

What was your primary motivation to join the gym?

I have always been an athletic guy. I used to play various outdoor sports like basketball and table tennis. One day, my friend pointed out that I have a strong-looking build, and if I were to join the gym, I could build a good physique. The idea sounded good, but it didn’t immediately bring about a spark. Slowly, when

I saw my friends gaining biceps and becoming fit after joining the gym, something clicked. I wanted abs. But soon, I realised fitness is much more than having six packs.

How can one begin and stick to their fitness journey?

It should start at home. If your family members are health conscious and choose nutritious food, then the process becomes a lot less tedious. Since fitness is not always about lifting heavy weights, families can push the young generation to exercise and become athletic. They can encourage children to go outside and take part in sports. While doing so, it is crucial to have consistency. It is easy to start but difficult to keep going.

Is a healthy diet important for maintaining one’s physique?

In my opinion, especially in Nepal, people make a huge deal out of diet. They exaggerate the concept. You often hear people saying that you should only eat boiled stuff, avoid sugar or only eat brown rice, which is totally wrong. Each body is different, and the calorie intake required depends on that. A diet plan for me may not be suitable for others. So, one should take a good look at themselves, measure their weight, esti-



PHOTO: COURTESY OF SUPRIAN SHRESTHA
Ojash Charan Joshi, fitness trainer.

mate the calories their body needs, and then keep track of calories consumed. Nutrition is a vital part of the journey, and we must keep our food intake in check.

What can busy people do to keep themselves fit?

People live by what’s important to them. If you believe something is important enough, you will find the time to do it. But if you really are really packed on schedule, you don’t have to go to the gym to maintain your physique. You can play football, cycle, walk, swim, and whatnot. Separate at least one hour daily to move your body and increase your heart rate. Start with something that falls under your comfort zone and slowly look for ways to challenge it.

Joshi believes that young people creating fitness-related content on social media has inspired many to hit the gym.

What do you think is the reason behind more people joining the gym?

People have come around to the idea of going to the gym. In the past, it was not considered a place where ‘decent’ people went. But now, people are more open to the concept. When I started, I once saw women bring someone with them, like their mother, just to feel safe. But now, they exercise independently without fear—seeing the gym as a safe place for personal growth. Also, the gym community is super supportive and welcoming. No one mocks you for your physicality. Social media, too, has played a massive part as many young people like to make gym-related content. On top of that, many bodybuilding and weight-lifting competitions are being organised, which gives gyms visibility.

Is the gym a healthy coping mechanism for you?

Absolutely. I recently went to Singapore and was so tired upon arriving. But after I hit the gym, my tardiness vanished, and I felt refreshed. I always look forward to feeling the adrenaline on my body while working out and then washing off the steam with a cold shower. Exercise releases dopamine which gives you a good night’s sleep and assists your body in digestion. All of these are a perfect recipe for sound health—both physically and mentally.

MY PODCAST PICKS



Srichchha Pradhan

Pradhan, who was crowned Miss Nepal World 2023 last month, is the founder of Deego Pranali, a sustainable lifestyle brand. She has a bachelor’s in environmental studies from Bennington College, USA.

>> For The Wild
Founded and hosted by Ayana Young in 2014, For the Wild is a female-led collective that reveals what lies behind the consumer-conscious world.

This is one of my favourite podcasts. I love it so much that a while ago, I considered sending them an application for an internship. The podcast takes a decolonised approach to understanding the environment.

>> Today, Explained
Today, Explained is a Vox production podcast hosted by Sean Rameshwaram and Noel King. Started in 2019, the podcast already has more than 1,300 episodes.

Whenever I want updates about the happenings of the world, I tune into Today, Explained. Because of my hectic schedule, I often do not have the time to read the news. So, this podcast is where I get my daily news digest.

>> Unlocking Us
Started in March 2020, Unlocking Us is a podcast hosted by American professor and author Brené Brown. The podcast has a total of 148 episodes.

I like this podcast because it helps me understand myself. Living in a patriarchal world, I was always a little uncomfortable being vulnerable. This podcast taught me to accept my emotions and balance softness with my headstrong personality.

>> Ted Climate
Ted Climate is a podcast hosted by Den Kwartler which started in 2020. The host shares how we can deal with and try to reduce the climate crisis.

Since childhood, I’ve been interested in environmental issues. The discussions on various conservation efforts and the overview it provides on new technologies being developed to combat the climate crisis are very insightful.