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India's opposition jubilant as Arvind Kejriwal gets bail to campaign in polls

REUTERS

India's top court gave temporary bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a graft case on Friday, allowing him to campaign in the ongoing general elections, boosting the opposition alliance of which he is a prominent figure

The Supreme Court said Kejriwal—a fierce critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi-would be out on bail until June 1, the last day of the nationwide seven-phase vote, and would have to return to pre-trial detention

India began voting on April 19 and elections for more than half of the 543 seats in parliament have now been completed following the third phase of the vote on May 7.

governed by The two areas Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)– the National Capital Territory that includes New Delhi, and the northern state of Punjab-go to the polls on May 25 and June 1 respectively.



Arvind Kejriwal greets supporters after his release from Tihar Jail in New Delhi, India.

Votes will be counted on June 4 and results are expected to be announced "It feels good to be back among

you," Kejriwal, dressed in a dark collarless T-shirt, told supporters through the sun-roof of a vehicle soon after being released from Delhi's Tihar jail.

supporters had gathered waving the party's yellow and blue flags, setting off firecrackers, shouting slogans and distributing sweets.

"I have only one request for you, we have to come together to save the country from dictatorship," Kejriwal said. "I am fighting with everything I have against this dictatorship. But 1.4 billion people will have to fight dictatorship," he said, referring to India's huge population.

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Home Minister Rabi Lamichhane (left) and Nepali Congress General Secretary Gagan Thapa (right) in the House of Representatives on Friday.

Nepal's banking industry is a leader in South Asia in employing women

They make up 45 percent of financial service staff, but much less in senior positions.

☐ KRISHANA PRASAIN

After completing her MBA, Devna applied for jobs in the banking industry and found an exciting role.

However, the interview had turned a little uncomfortable when her prospective manager asked about her plans for marriage and motherhood.

She was assigned to a branch. In the beginning, Devna lived alone and spent long hours at work. She felt her work-life balance could have been better and she was also concerned for her safety when travelling late.

However, her life as an ambitious young banker kept her motivated.

After marriage, she moved in with her in-laws and her ability to work late changed drastically. She now rushed home after the close of business to be with her daughter, care for her ageing in-laws and manage household tasks.

Devna's work continued to be impeccable.

However, the lack of support from colleagues and increasing chores at home affected her morale. She was unable to travel often as her daughter was still young. This affected her

annual appraisal. Additionally, unclear and inadequate feedback meant she could not

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Thapa, Lamichhane trade barbs as House meet fails on Day 1

Home minister dares Congress leader to establish his guilt. Thapa challenges Lamichhane to prove his innocence.

The main opposition Nepali Congress obstructed the proceedings of the House of Representatives on the first day of the budget session on Friday to press its demand for a parliamentary investigation into Home Minister Rabi Lamichhane for his alleged role in the cooperatives scam.

The party also said it will continue the obstruction until the House forms a committee to investigate Lamichhane and the problems of the cooperative sector.

At the start of the session, Congress lawmakers rose from their seats and chanted slogans until the Speaker asked Congress General Secretary Gagan Kumar Thapa to make a brief statement. Speaking from his seat, Thapa accused the ruling parties of trying to silence questions in Parliament and warned that his party would not tolerate such attempts.

Similarly, leader of the parliamentary party of the Nepali Congress in National Assembly Krishna Prasad Sitaula, also reiterated on Friday that the party will disrupt proceedings of the upper house until the government announces the investigation committee.

Following Thapa's warning, the Speaker stopped the House proceeding for 15 minutes and held a discussion with the chief whips of major parties in an attempt to end the In the evening, the Speaker resumed allow the Speaker even to read the letter from the President's Office.

The Congress did not

the House session and announced that

the home minister wanted to make a

statement. However, the Congress law-

makers immediately rushed towards the rostrum and prevented the home

Speaker Ghimire then adjourned

Police and other state bodies have

come up with various probe reports

showing Lamichhane's involvement

in cooperative scams. In the latest

minister from speaking.

the session until Tuesday.

development, a report of a probe committee formed by the Pokhara Metropolitan City on Thursday revealed that the Suryadarshan Savings and Credit Cooperatives had issued a loan of Rs10 million in the name of Lamichhane based on a form he filled up to borrow the amount.

The transaction details were found when the panel investigated complaints of embezzlement of savings worth Rs1.35 billion by 18,700 members of the cooperative.

Lamichhane, however, on Friday denied the allegation of applying for the loan at the Pokhara-based

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Need for counselling as students complain of rigid school rules

Students and mental health facilitators believe that regular school counselling can go a long way in creating a healthy learning environment.

■ MANUSHREE MAHAT

KATHMANDU, MAY 10

Kenisha Thapa could have avoided two years of mental and emotional anguish. She finished her 10th grade in Kavya School, and up until then, her days knew little trouble as her school was her about grades, and were empathetic to students' concerns. Life was good.

When she began her +2 at a different school, however, hell broke loose.

At her new school, students were not allowed to change their once chosen seats from their first day. Thapa enjoyed her time with her classmates, but there she could barely interact with anyone beyond the two people she first met. Her school had a number of senseless rules—the bathrooms had no mirrors because, according to the school, students should spend all their time studying not grooming themselves.



In a traumatising incident one day, she was called out in the middle of her high school grounds for merely talking to a guy friend.

'They told me that the way I was talking to a guy friend was 'unethical'," said Thapa. "My high school teachers had no idea of what constitutes a healthy environment at schools. Mental health

In many sociological definitions, schools where children spend the most of their early life, are social institutions that cater to the needs of society by churning out adults who can maintain social harmony, and facilitate social growth. Research shows that adolescence is a vulnera-

ble time when it comes to mental health, mainly due to the profound physical and mental changes that mark this age.

School counsellors perform a multitude of roles for students—from tackling academic issues, to psychosocial and emotional support, as well as other mental health concerns.

According to the National Health Survey 2022, 13 percent of women of age 14-19 years, and seven percent of the same age group suffer from anxiety. Within the same age group, four percent women, and one percent men have some form of depression.

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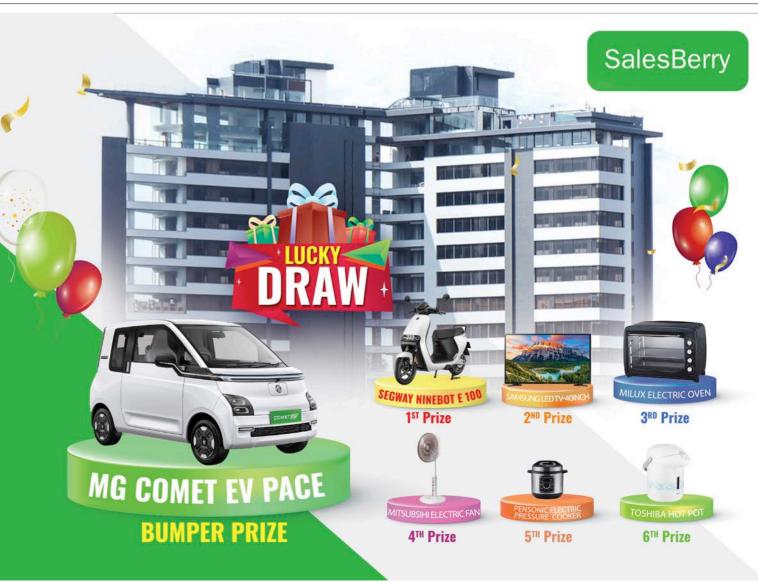
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Two dead, three injured after tractor plunges into river

□ DISTRICT DIGEST

RUKUM WEST: Two people died and three others were injured when a tractor plunged into the Bheri River in ward 14 of Athbiskot Municipality Rukum West, on Friday. According to Police Inspector Bishnu Prasad Shrestha, information officer at the District Police Office Rukum, the tractor en route to Jajarkot from Athbiskot fell some 150 metres down the road, killing two men aged 22 and 18 from Athibiskot. The injured were taken to Chauriahari Mission Hospital for treatment, he added Further investigation into the case is underway, said officials.

Man arrested for raping mentally challenged minor

LAMJUNG: On Thursday night, police arrested a 46-year-old man from ward 7 of Madhyanepal Municipality on charge of raping a 14-year-old mentally challenged girl. According to Police Inspector Thaneshwar Chapai, information officer at the Lamjung District Police Office, the girl was allegedly raped by the man in a local forest on Thursday afternoon, and the arrest was made after victim's relatives filed a complaint. The accused was presented at the District Court on Friday and has been remanded into judicial custody by the court. Further investigation into the case is going on, said Chapai

Unidentified decomposing body found

KAVRE: A charred and decomposing body of a man was found in Biraje Kholcha Forest in ward 4 of Panchkhal Municipality on Friday morning, According to Raikumar Shrestha, an information officer at the Kavre District Police Office, they are investigating the incident as a case of homicide. The man was found tied to a tree using wires and burned. The identity of the man, thought to be of around 30 years of age, has yet to be ascertained. A preliminary police investigation has suggested that the man was killed more than two weeks ago. The body has been sent for a post-mortem, and further investigation into the case is going on, said Shrestha.

Illegal yarsa collectors taking risky routes to mountain grasslands give officials headache

74 people have been nabbed in a month for using restricted and prohibited routes inside Shey Phoksundo National Park.

RAJ BAHADUR SHAHI

MUGU, MAY 10

With the yarsagumba harvest season kicking off in the highlands of northern districts, many people are taking illegal shortcut routes to get there ahead of schedule and to avoid paying fees for permit fees.

Yarsagumba (Ophiocordyceps sinensis) is a caterpillar fungus prized for its purported medicinal properties. In just one month, officials have arrested and fined 74 collectors for using restricted and prohibited routes inside the Shey Phoksundo National Park.

Yarsa is found in decent quantities in 32 areas, including seven forest areas of Mugum Karmarong Rural Municipality, Mugu, and 25 areas of Shey Phoksundo National Park in Dolpa

According to Bishwababu Shrestha, senior conservation officer of the Shey Phoksundo National Park, permits were issued to collectors only on May 23 to start their treks to the highlands of Dolpa using the traditional routes. Similarly, permits were issued to collectors to start their journey to the Mugu highlands only on May 28. But many others without permits are using illegal routes.

Shey Phoksundo National Park is the largest and only trans-Himalayan national park in Nepal, and it is spread over Mugu and Dolpa. Park officials are having difficulties in carrying out their regular duties because of the trespassers.

Yarsagumba is a parasitic fungus that grows within a variety of moth caterpillars in grasslands high in the Himalayan region. Locally called yarsa, in short, the fungus kills the caterpillar and emerges from the dead body as a thin stem. Yarsagumba is in high demand in a number of countries in East Asia, particularly China.

Yarsagumba fetches up to Rs1.8 million per kilo in Mugu, and up to Rs2 million in Dolpa district.

Shrestha said that the entrance to the highlands is not open, but 74 people were going to the highlands



People carrying food and logistics on wicker baskets heading for yarsagumba-rich highlands of Mugu district, in this undated photo.

through mountain trails, which require special permission to travel due to various risk factors.

"The number of people using illegal shortcuts to reach the highlands, ignoring the risks, is increasing. On Thursday, a 19-year-old man on his way to the uplands through an illegal route died of altitude sickness," said Shrestha.

The collectors using illegal routes are mostly from outside Mugu and Dolpa districts.

In order to go to the highlands to collect yarsa, one has to acquire permission from the local unit where the collection area is located, and in the context of Dolpa, one has to acquire permission from the park or the Division Forest Office.

Most of the collectors use illegal routes, risking their lives to reach the highlands early in their attempt to harvest more yarsa and earn more. The locals of Mugu and Dolpa can acquire permission by paying Rs2,500 per person, and collectors from outside the district have to pay Rs3,000 per person.

Tsering Kyanpe Lama, chairman of

Municipality, said that despite their repeated efforts, the number of people going to the highlands without acquiring permission, is increasing.

Most of those found in the lower altitudes without permit are turned.

Karmarong

altitudes without permit are turned back without any action, but those found in the highlands are arrested and fined.

"Most of the people arrested using

"Most of the people arrested using illegal means and without permission were from Jumla. The traditional route for the highlands is through the banks of the Karnali River, which takes three to four days to reach the highlands and more if the weather is bad," said Lama. "Last year, around

9,000 people went to the highlands to collect yarsa, and two people died due to altitude sickness. We don't have exact information about people who get lost in the highlands or die, because around 300 to 400 people go to the highlands without obtaining permission or registering themselves," Lama added.

Shrestha said that the security per-

sonnel of the park are having difficulties controlling the people using the illegal routes.

"The local units of both districts have also deployed people along with police to tackle trespassing and to verify permits, but due to the huge influx of people, mainly from outside the district, everybody is having difficulties controlling them," said Shrestha. "There are countless routes in the mountains to reach the highlands, and due to a lack of manpower, we cannot cover them all," Shrestha added.

India's Kejriwal granted bail for electioneering

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The court had said last week that it may consider granting Kejriwal temporary bail "because of the elections" while it heard an appeal against his arrest, as that hearing could take a while to conclude.

Opposition parties have accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government of using investigative agencies to hurt its rivals, which the government denies.

Over the years Kejriwal has accused Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of damaging democracy, promoting corruption, throttling governance in Delhi, abusing their power and attacking the federal structure of the constitution among other things.

BJP spokesperson Shazia Ilmi said the party has always respected the verdicts of the highest court. "You're will not be able to play the

"Kejriwal will not be able to play the victim card. He can't say that he is being discriminated against, that all the agencies and courts are against him," she told ANI news agency, in which Reuters has a minority stake.

"Secondly, and importantly, he has got interim bail, not freedom. He has to go back to jail on June 2," Ilmi added.

The Enforcement Directorate,

India's financial crime-fighting agency, arrested Kejriwal on March 21 in connection with corruption allegations related to the capital territory's liquor policy.

Kejriwal's government and his AAP have denied the allegations. Modi and BJP say the investigating agencies are only doing their job and the government is not influencing them.

Kejriwal has been in pre-trial detention since April 1, and his wife Sunita has stepped in to campaign for his decade-old party which has been hobbled by the detention also of two other senior leaders in the same case.

Members of the INDIA alliance of more than two dozen opposition parties—Modi's main challenger which includes the AAP—said they were pleased that Kejriwal had received bail.

Mamata Banerjee, chief minister of the eastern state of West Bengal and a key INDIA member, said she was "very happy" Kejriwal got bail.

Court bars Gandaki government from taking long-term decisions

■ POST REPORT KATHMANDU, MAY 10

The Supreme Court on Friday barred the Khagaraj Adhikari-led Gandaki provincial government from taking any decisions with long-term consequences.

The interim order issued by the single bench of Justice Abdul Aziz Musalman prohibits the government from doing any work other than regular tasks. The bench was responding to a writ petition filed by immediate past chief minister Surendra Raj Pandey of the Nepali Congress against the controversial vote of confidence given to the chief minister in the provincial assembly on Sunday.

"An interim order not to take decisions with long-term consequences has been issued for now as the court, during a final hearing, will decide whether the position of the chief minister remains intact and what is the majority number determined by the constitution for appointing a chief minister," the court said in the order.

The bench issued a show-cause notice to the defendants, prioritised the writ petition and scheduled its next hearing for May 21.

On May 5, the Speaker of Gandaki provincial assembly declared that Chief Minister Adhikari secured the trust vote. Amid protest from the opposition party, Speaker Krishna Prasad Dhital announced that the votes obtained by the chief minister constituted a majority based on the Supreme Court's recent ruling.

The announcement triggered yet another controversy regarding the

majority number in the 60-strong provincial assembly.

A total of 30 members voted in favour of Chief Minister Adhikari. Then the Speaker claimed that the number was sufficient to prove the majority's support.

Meanwhile, the top court on the same day refused to issue an interim order as sought by the plaintiff in a separate writ petition challenging the appointment of Hikmat Karki as the Koshi chief minister.

Hearing a petition filed by the immediate past chief minister Kedar Karki of the Congress, a single bench of Justice Hari Phuyal asked the defendants including the Office of the Province Head to furnish reasons within 10 days for the appointment and to explain why the order sought by the plaintiff should not be issued.

"There is no need for an interim order; it is more suitable to resolve the dispute through a final hearing as it requires a constitutional interpretation," the bench said in the order.

The bench scheduled the final hearing in the writ petition on May 22.

The former chief minister moved the top court on Thursday, terming the appointment of UML's Hikmat Karki as unconstitutional.

On Thursday, Koshi Province Head Khapung appointed Hikmat Karki after the UML leader staked his claim to the post with the support of 52 law-makers. The backing of 47 lawmakers is the minimum needed to form a government in the 93-strong assembly.

It is Karki's third stint as chief minister and the sixth government in Koshi in the 17 months.

Need for school counsellors up as mental health awareness grows

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School students and mental health counsellors alike believe that regular school counselling can go a long way in creating a healthy environment at schools

Madhu Bilash Khanal has over a decade of experience as a school counsellor. He believes that a school can explore a student's fullest potential only by providing psychological counselling. Schools should make efforts to understand their students' feelings and struggles and help them solve the problems.

"It is vital that every school incorporates counselling to bring out the best in their students," Khanal says.

In western countries, school mental health screening tests are also beginning to gain traction. These tests not only highlight psychological problems, but also serve as a preventative tool for students at risk of developing severe mental health problems.

Khanal states that a major role of school counsellors is also to recognise and refer students with severe psychological problems to hospitals and psychiatric facilities.

A research conducted in 2020 on Nepali teachers' awareness on the mental well-being of students showed that a significant number of teachers were aware of the emotional and mental health issues of their students. While 10 percent of the teachers had no idea about the issues of their students, a whopping 70 percent were able to identify somatic problems like tiredness, attention problems and 50 percent of the teachers could recognise mental health problems like being sad, bullied, and various speech problems.

Prakriti Pourel, a learning support counsellor at The British School,

Kathmandu, shares that school counsellors play a crucial role in creating a safe environment at schools for optimal education. She states that school counselling is a combination of an understanding between teachers, students, as well as parents, to promote the overall mental well-being of a child

"We, as counsellors, coordinate with

teachers to better understand the emotional well-being of a student. If there's something that a teacher does that affects students emotionally, we ask them to stop," says Pourel. Teachers do take a long time to

Teachers do take a long time to grasp the full extent of mental well-being of students, says Khanal.

"A lot of teachers take mental health lightly. We take time to train teachers that schools are not just about studying. They should also understand students well, and equip them with skills that help them throughout life," Khanal says.

Thapa, the student, also sees lack of understanding on the teachers' part as a reason for her emotional distress.

"Teachers at my school didn't know how to handle these issues privately. First of all, there's nothing wrong with talking to a boy in my class, and teachers should know that. And there was no need to call me out in front of the entire school like that," says Thapa.

Often, children suffering from bad academics have hidden family problems. Inability to concentrate at schools, engaging in risky behaviours, poor attendance—they can be the result of deep-rooted personal and family problems.

"School counselling also addresses familial issues, and this involves directly engaging parents in counselling," Khanal says. "To ensure the best for students, bringing in the parents, and teachers, to counselling is the key to holistic growth of the students."

A research conducted in Kailali dis-

A research conducted in Kailali district revealed that students from poor economic backgrounds also have poor academic records. This was because such parents worry about employment more than their children's education. This eventually results in the students seeking low paying jobs in the labour market.

School counselling may play an important role to avoid this vicious cycle of poverty. Many private schools in the country now employ school counsellors who can cater to the middle- and upper-middle class students. But as students from poor economic backgrounds could be facing even more stress, providing school counsellors in community and government schools, as well as the rural areas of the country is vital.

Khanal, who engages in programmes with community and government schools, with the Centre for Mental Health and Counselling-Nepal (CMC), shares that the government should prioritise catering to the mental health of less-privileged students.

Sambhavya Foundation, a non-profit organisation, has been working with several government schools to incorporate counselling for students, along with teachers, and parents.

On April 28 CMC also appropried a

On April 28, CMC also announced a plan to start training teachers on mental health and psychosocial counselling in community schools.

Khadka Bahadur Basnet, central committee member of N-PABSON, an umbrella organisation of private schools, agrees that counselling in schools is necessary. He finds faults in

the age-old system of rote learning that only tests students' ability to memorise the texts, instead of truly understanding them.

"That leads students to frustration and to give up on their studies. The only way to bring out the best in students, while also training the teachers to understand students, is counselling," said Basnet. "Instead of punishing the students, it's vital to understand them. For this, counselling is absolutely necessary."

Students that the Post talked to said there is often a hesitancy on their part to seek counselling. At times, they choose to keep it to themselves for a while.

Many students may take time to

open up fully, especially while deciding to take one-on-one sessions. Pourel, the learning support counsellor, shares her observation that as opposed to girls, boys are much less forthcoming on their issues, and almost never approach mental health counsellors on their own.

Despite this, students that the Post talked to agreed that accessible counselling would benefit both their psychological and academic lives.

A study conducted in Kenya also revealed that a significant amount of students felt positive changes and satisfaction following school counselling. Around 74.3 percent of students showed academic improvement, and 80 percent of students expressed a positive student life in the aftermath of psychosocial school counselling.

"If children are told at a young age that it's okay to ask for help, they will feel heard and healed starting from a vulnerable age. This will significantly improve their mental health in the future," says Pourel.

Nepali Congress' persistence for Lamichhane investigation disrupts House sitting

> Continued from page 1

The Congress also accused the home minister of influencing state organs including the Office of the Attorney General to forestall investigation into the cooperative scam.

"The home minister is facing accu-

मोटरसाइकल हरायो

मिति २०८१।०१।२२ गते कामनपा १५ मनमोहन अस्पताल अगाडि पार्किङबाट अन्दाजी ८:२० देखि ९:२० बजे बा.प्र.०२-०४३प २४३८ नं. को कालो/रातो २२० सीसीको पल्सर २२० F मोटरसाइकल हराएको हुँदा पाउनु हुने महानुभावले नजिकको प्रहरी कार्यालय वा फोन नं. ९८५११४१४०७ मा सम्पर्क गरिदिनु हुन अनुरोध छ।

जामः राकेश राजबाहक, कामनपा∙७, फुटुड च्यासिस नं. : MD2A13EXXNCM86633 इन्जिन नं. DKXCNM40967 sations of embezzling millions of rupees from several cooperatives, yet no case has been filed against him. Also, there has not been any investigation. The prime minister lied to the House. The office of the attorney general was influenced. Should I submit evidence of the home minister taking millions of rupees in loans from various cooperatives? We are demanding a probe committee and until it is formed, we will not allow the House to conduct its business," said Thapa, speaking in the House on Friday afternoon.

However, the ruling parties, includ-

noon.

However, the ruling parties, including the home minister, have consistently rubbished the demand for such a committee.

"I am ready to quit politics, if I have taken any loan from a cooperative," Lamichhane told reporters outside the Parliament building. "Are you [Thapa] too prepared to do the same?" Congress General Secretary Thapa also challenged Lamichhane to prove the allegations against him wrong through an investigation. "Today Gaganji claimed he has evi-

"Today Gaganji claimed he has evidence that I took loans. If I had indeed taken the loan, then I would quit politics. But would he be ready to do the same? Some media are spreading disinformation against me. If it is proven that I applied for the loan, I will quit politics," said Lamichhane.

Lamichhane says he will quit politics if anyone proves he applied for cooperative loan.

But Thapa challenged the home minister. "Come to the parliamentary committee," said Thapa. "Please prove

us wrong, and prove me and Nepali Congress wrong." The Congress leaders have accused

the home minister of influencing state agencies, perhaps to destroy incriminating evidence against him. "It has been established by the sev-

eral inquiries that home minister Lamichhane has taken millions of loans from different cooperatives based in Pokhara, Chitwan and Pokhara," said Thapa.

"Police have collected these proofs. With so much evidence, why is Lamichhane being let off the hook? Why is he avoiding investigation and obtaining a 'clean chit' from an unnecessary police department? According to the Cooperatives Act, no outsider can take loans from a cooperative without becoming its member, and cooperative funds cannot be used in profitable business. But Lamichhane was not a member of any of the cooperatives and the money he borrowed

from the cooperatives was 'illegally' used to run a media house."

During their meeting with the

Speaker, the Congress stood firm in its demand.

The party also did not allow the

Speaker to read out the letter issued by President Ramchandra Paudel. Another opposition party, the

Loktantrik Samajbadi Party, has also joined the Congress in demanding a parliamentary investigation against the home minister. Earlier, on Friday morning, a meet-

ing of the Congress parliamentary party had decided to disrupt both houses of parliament until its demand for parliamentary investigation was addressed.

Meanwhile, CPN-UML chair KP Oli said that the Congress targeted Lamichhane after he rejected the party's offer to become prime minister. "Now the Congress is digging up dirt on him and playing the game of political vendetta." Oli was also speaking at the party's parliamentary meeting on Friday morning. "At present, the Nepali Congress is

not demanding the home minister's resignation, but it will make the demand soon after the parliamentary committee is formed, citing conflict of interest," said Oli.

Both the Congress leaders. Thana

Both the Congress leaders, Thapa and Sitaula, also stated that the Congress has not demanded the resignation of the home minister.

A senior Congress leader said that the party is not going to drop the demand for parliamentary investigation into cooperatives scam until the issue is settled by Parliament. "This is our red line. The govern-

ment wants to bring new budget and policies and programmes, but it can do so through an ordinance also. We won't allow the House to resume as easily as the ruling parties assume," he said.

•••

Caste discrimination against Dalits is systemic and widespread: Amnesty International report



Amnesty International report on the age-old discrimination against Dalits was unveiled on Friday.

POST REPORT

On July 14, 2016, Ajit Mijar, 18, was found dead in Dhading in suspicious circumstances. The boy belonging to the Dalit community was in a relationship with a girl from the so-called 'upper caste', which her family opposed.

The police recorded his death as suicide and his corpse declared as unidentified as he belonged to Kavrepalanchok, a different district. The body was quickly buried by the authorities without informing the family.

Suspecting foul play, Hari Bhakta, Ajit's father, filed the first information report with the Area Police Office, Gajuri of Dhading on July 17, 2016, claiming the case to be murder. He named three relatives of the girl as suspects. The police, after investigating the incident, lodged a case in the district court. In June 2018, the Dhading District Court acquitted all three accused.

The decision was challenged in a higher court. However, the Patan High Court in April 2022 upheld the lower court's verdict to acquit the accused.

After instructions from the High Court Public Prosecutor's Office, the Office of the Attorney General decided not to appeal the judgement. Unsatisfied with the decision, Ajit's father moved the Supreme Court challenging the decisions of the subordinate courts. Ajit's corpse is lying in a morgue in Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital as his family is unwilling to perform the funeral rites until justice is served.

"In Nepal, where caste-based discrimination is systemic and widespread, several Dalits like Mijar even lose lives due to the criminal practice," read a research report by Amnesty International unveiled on Friday. "Yet justice is not served."

The report "No One Cares: Descent-Based Discrimination against Dalits" documents the experience of systemic castebased discrimination in Nepal and the challenges they face in accessing justice.

The report based on focus group discussions with 52 individuals from different sectors and one-on-one meetings with 21 representing Dalit communities from Madhesh, Lumbini and Karnali provinces register complaints. And even when cases are lodged, there is no assurance of justice owing to the loopholes in the existing law, as per the report.

It claims that at the time of registering a first information report (FIR), the Dalit victims are required to produce evidence of untouchability practice or the discrimination they faced. In some incidents, the victims are beaten by the police to deter them from filing the cases, states the report.

As per the records at the Attorney General's Office, as many as 52 cases relating to caste-based discrimination were filed in the district courts. Of them, 15 ended in conviction while 12 resulted in acquittal. Similarly, among 42 cases filed in the high

courts, only 10 resulted in conviction. If the claim of Durga Sob, a Dalit rights activist, is anything to go by, less than five percent of cases of caste-based discrimination reach the police.

The reports claim that untouchability has become a norm even if untouchability and caste-based discrimination have been prohibited and criminalised by law.

"Untouchability is an everyday affair in Nepal and the culture of impunity is deeply rooted in the society," said Monica Vincent, a lead researcher of the report. "The role of the police has been seen as a barrier in accessing justice.'

Officials at the Amnesty International say there are constitutional as well as legal instruments in place against the castebased discrimination. However, they have not been rightly implemented.

"The authorities in Nepal are not doing enough to counteract the culture of impunity for human rights violations related descent-based discrimination in Nepal," said Fernanda Doz Costa, Amnesty International's director for gender and racial justice programme.

"Efforts made by the authorities are still inadequate and insufficient, and they seem to exist only on paper but do not translate into real changes in the lives and the human rights of Dalits, Dalit women and girls in particular.'

The organisation pointed out that impunity is rampant for several reasons, including inadequate statute of limitations provisioned in existing laws, lack of representation of Dalits in the justice system and institutional discrimination in the police and lack of effective oversight mechanisms and accountability.

"Dalits do not trust the police and the justice system in general, and the limited government level data and statistics available [only 30-43 cases per year registered under the Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability, (Offence and Punishment) Act] confirm their distrust is well-founded including for Dalit women confronting caste-based violence," reads the report.

"The inactions or limited actions of Nepali authorities, including failing to hold public officers accountable and closing the trust deficits are reinforcing this culture of impunity and are sending a message to society that caste- and gender-based discrimination and violence are acceptable

Amnesty International said the Nepali authorities must create a holistic plan for a truly transformative response to uproot the caste- and gender-based violence and discrimination based on human rights obligations and with an intersectional lens.

There is an urgent need to take special measures to improve the situation of Dalit women and girls due to the inter-generational history of oppression and entrenched culture of caste bias, patriarchy and discrimination, it said.

"Nepal must fulfil its obligation to provide effective, timely and meaningful access to justice and reparations for survivors. It must move away from merely paying lip service to the ideals of achieving equality for all but take a concrete humanrights-centric approach to relegating descent-based discrimination to the dustbins of history," said Costa.

Kathmandu metropolis trains 1,500 youths

POST REPORT KATHMANDU, MAY 10

A total of 1,500 youths from various districts of the country have been receiving vocational training imparted by the Kathmandu Metropolitan City.

The city office said that an additional 1,100 youths, who had shown keen interest in training, will be selected in the second phase, which will start after the completion of the first batch.

"Our staff have been sorting out additional candidates who are genuinely interested in the training," said Shailendra Jha, a member of the municipal planning commission. "They will receive training in the second phase.

The City office had planned to train 2,081 youths in the KMC "Skill Fair-2024" that kicked off on May 1. However, the number of unemployed youths applying for the training opportunity is set to increase given the high demand, officials said. Some aspirants have arrived in Kathmandu all

the way from several remote districts. According to KMC officials, the training is being imparted in collaboration with various organisations including Higher Institutions and Secondary Schools'

Association Nepal and others. "Some youths will graduate after a week and some in three weeks," said Jha. "The training may not make one fully skilled but help them figure out the area of their interest, help them get basic knowledge and encourage them to search for apprenticeship training."

Officials said they have also contacted various companies to provide on-the-job training to those completing the municipal course. The majority of the youths receiving training are non-voters of the metropolis, according to officials. Most youths have shown interest in mobile repair, computer maintenance, house wiring and plumbing.

The metropolis plans to tie the programme to its labour bank, which was started to help unemployed youths in finding jobs and to help private organisations, companies and business entities operating in the metropolis find the required workforce.

Around 400 unemployed youths, who had applied for jobs, have found jobs under the city office itself for repair and maintenance, cleaning, environmental conservation, and river cleaning. Officials said that organisations and companies can also approach the metropolis if they want to hire the unemployed youths.











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Dollar steadies after losses on soft jobs data, pound gains

LONDON/SINGAPORE, MAY 10

The dollar steadied on Friday after losing ground overnight on the back of US data showing further signs of a cooling labour market, while the British pound inched higher after data showed the UK economy beat expectations in the first quarter.

Against the Japanese yen, the dollar was trading at 155.68 yen, up 0.15 percent but unable to reclaim Thursday's 155.95 high.

The euro stood at \$1.0783, almost flat after a 0.3 percent gain overnight.

The dollar index, which measures the greenback against six peers, was little changed at 105.22 after falling 0.3 percent on Thursday.

The retreat followed data showing a jump in initial claims for US state unemployment benefits. Coming on top of last week's weak payrolls report, it further encouraged investors that the Federal Reserve will start lowering interest rates in the autumn and spurred buying of stocks and bonds, pulling down yields.

Alvin Tan, head of Asia FX strategy at RBC Capital Markets, said the dollar was unlikely to fall too far, however, given that high US interest rates still make US bonds attractive.

"They're still offering the highest rates in the G10 space. So that, in tandem with low volatility, suggests the US dollar will remain supported," he said. "It's setting up to be more range-trading

Investors nudged sterling higher on Friday after data showed the UK economy grew 0.6 percent, more than expected, in the first quarter of the year, exiting a mild recession.

The pound was last up 0.1 percent at \$1.2537, having traded at \$1.2516 before the figures. It fell to a two-week low on Thursday after the Bank of England held interest rates but paved the way for a cut in

Many commercial banks in Nepal don't have women on their boards





In South Asia, only Bhutan-where women occupy 46 percent of positions in financial services—has a better representation of women.

>> Continued from page 1

On some days, Devna wanted to take time off to be with her daughter, finish pending chores, and relax. But her manager was reluctant to approve these short breaks. Many colleagues warned her that taking leave would make her seem "less committed" than her peers. She soldiered on, even when she was burnt

She was eventually promoted to middle management-years behind her male peers.

New challenges soon emerged. Previously, she was interrupted when speaking during team meetings. Now, she also felt disrespected by her subordinates.

Despite social challenges in the patriarchal society, Nepal's banking industry is a leader in South Asia when it comes to women's representation in commercial banks' workforce, according to a report published on Wednesday.

Women constitute 45 percent of employees in the financial services industry in Nepal, against a regional average of 20 percent, said tne report titied Advancement in Banking in Emerging South Asian Countries', the first of its kind in the region published by the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

Among South Asian countries, only Bhutanwhere women occupy 46 percent of positions in financial services—has a better representation of women.

In commercial banks too, representation of women in the workforce is better than other regional peers; in Nepal, women occupy 42 percent of all roles in surveyed commercial banks compared to 38 percent in Sri Lanka and 18 percent in Bangladesh.

Nepal also has a legal framework to promote women's economic participation that is more comprehensive than its neighbours in South Asia.

Dedicated laws like those that guarantee parental leave for both women and men and prohibit workplace discrimination based on a person's sex are in effect and have created a strong foundation for women to participate and contribute to the industry.

Nepal also requires companies, including banks, to have at least one female board member.

Nearly all banks have also instituted policies aimed at improving women's representation in their workforce.

"Nepal has a strong legal framework to promote women's economic participation in the country. And these provisions are more comprehensive than other countries in South Asia,' said Martin Holtmann, IFC Country Manager for Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan

"While these progressive policies have allowed Nepal to be a leader in the region,

more needs to be done to increase the number of women in leadership positions and to reach gender parity."

Despite the overwhelming representation of women at the entry level, only 23 percent manage to lead senior management roles in Nepal. The study identifies opportunities that can enable more women to advance to senior roles in the banking industry in South Asia.

The report said that Nepal is ahead of its neighbours in terms of representation in leadership roles as well, but has yet to catch up to the global

In comparison, women constitute 20 percent of senior management roles in Sri Lanka and 12 percent of the same in Bangladesh. Nepal also requires companies, including banks, to have at least one female board member.

However, many class-A (commercial) banks do not have female representation on their boards, the report said.

The country has yet to catch up to the global average. Globally, women constileadership roles in commercial banks

The gulf is wider when compared to high-income countries like the United Kingdom where women form 36 percent of the senior leadership in banks.

A majority of the surveyed banks in Nepal have clearly articulated gender diversity and inclusion policies. They have also set gender balance targets for the workforce. However, major gaps still exist.

"To tell the truth, men

find it hard to trust and feel at ease with women in senior positions. We belong to a patriarchal society, which makes it difficult for men to obey the orders from women. It hurts their ego," said Anupama Khunjeli, former CEO of Mega Bank Nepal, now Nepal Investment Mega

"This is the only issue as I see, otherwise women these days are well-educated and smart.'

As large numbers of Nepali men are going abroad to study and work, women are willing to take jobs in their own country, Khunjeli said. "Plus women start work-

ing at the age of 24-25, the family tells them to get married and once they have a child, they do not become able to compete compared to men as women have the social responsibility to look after the family as well,' Khunjeli said.

"So, women hardly make it to managerial positions. And even if she reached senior managerial level, the high representation of men has low acceptance of women.'

More women are engaged in banks and financial institutions due to their sincerity in jobs with low fraudulent activities, Khunjeli said.



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Time running out for Arsenal

The Gunners, chasing their first Premier League title for 20 years, are likely to have been dislodged from the top of the table by the time they kick off at Old Trafford on Sunday.

Arsenal, boasting a superior goal difference in the **English Premier League,** need Manchester City to stumble but the signs are

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON MAY 10

Arsenal have barely put a foot wrong in the Premier League in 2024 but, as the title race approaches the finish line, they desperately need a favour from Fulham, who host relentless Manchester City this

Mikel Arteta's Gunners, who travel Manchester United, are one point clear at the top of the table with two matches to play but Pep Guardiola's men, crucially, have a game in hand

Nottingham Forest will take a huge step towards safety if they beat in-form Chelsea, who are battling Newcastle and Manchester United for a European spot.

Arsenal cling to hope of City slip-up

When the 2023/24 fixture list came out, Sunday's trip to Manchester

United would have seemed a tricky task for Arsenal, but it is not looking The Gunners, chasing their first

Premier League title for 20 years, are likely to have been dislodged from the top of the table by the time they kick off at Old Trafford on Sunday.

That is because second placed City, in the hunt for a historic fourth straight Premier League title, are in action at Fulham the previous day.

City are unbeaten against the London side in 21 games in all compe

Arsenal will be confident they can

beat a spluttering United team, who appear increasingly likely to miss out on European football next season after their embarrassing 4-0 defeat at Crystal Palace on Monday.

City's game in hand is next week at Tottenham, where they have never even scored a goal in the league, but Spurs' form has deserted them and Erling Haaland is back to his marauding best.

Arsenal, boasting a superior goal difference, need City to stumble but the signs are not promising.

Newcastle, Chelsea battle for Europe

Newcastle and Chelsea are both making a late-season charge for a European place, helped by Manchester United's

Eddie Howe's Newcastle are in pole position to take either a Europa League or UEFA Conference League spot, depending on results in the last few rounds of the Premier League and in the FA Cup final between Manchester City and Manchester United.

They could even finish in fifth spot if Tottenham implode further.

Sixth-placed Newcastle, who host Brighton on Saturday, have won five of their past seven league games.

Free-scoring Chelsea were well off the pace just weeks ago, but a run of one defeat in their past 12 league games has given them hope of salvaging a troubled season.

Mauricio Pochettino's men travel to relegation-threatened Nottingham Forest knowing a win will keep alive their hopes of a European spot.

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

FIXTURES			STANDINGS							
PLAYING SATURDAY			Team	Р	W	L	D	GA	GA	PT
Fulham 1	17:15	Man City	Arsenal	36	26	5	5	88	28	83
Everton 1	19:45	Sheffield	Man City	35	25	7	3	87	33	82
West Ham 1	19:45	Luton Town	Liverpool	36	23	9	4	81	38	78
Bournemouth 1	9:45	Brentford	Aston Villa	36	20	7	9	73	53	67
Wolves 1	9:45	Crystal Palace	Tottenham	35	18	6	11	69	58	60
Tottenham 1	19:45	Burnley	Newcastle	35	17	5	13	78	56	56
Newcastle 1	19:45	Brighton	Chelsea	35	15	9	11	70	59	54
Forest 2	22:15	Chelsea	Man United	35	16	6	13	52	55	54
PLAYIN	PLAYING SUNDAY		West Ham	36	13	10	13	56	70	49
Man United 21	1:15	Arsenal	Bournemouth	36	13	9	14	52	63	48
PLAYING TUESDAY		Brighton	35	12	11	12	53	57	47	
Aston Villa 0	0:45	Liverpool	Wolves	36	13	7	16	49	60	46
Found are safety			Fulham	36	12	8	16	51	55	44
Wolves 19:45 Crystal Palace Tottenham 19:45 Burnley Newcastle 19:45 Brighton Forest 22:15 Chelsea PLAYING SUNDAY Man United 21:15 Arsenal PLAYING TUESDAY	Palace	36	11	10	15	49	57	43		
that an appeal aga	ainst 1	their four-point	Everton	36	12	9	15	38	49	37
			Brentford	36	9	9	18	52	60	36
			Forest	36	8	9	19	45	63	29

Sheffield (R) 36 3 7 26 35 100 16 Notes: Top four teams qualify for the Champions League, fifth-placed team enters Europa League, bottom three relegated.

points deduction. They are favourites to avoid the drop but if results go against them this weekend, they could yet face a shootout for survival with Burnley on the final weekend.

Atalanta target Champions League after making history

Gasperini's men beat Marseille 3-0 and 4-1 on aggregate in the semi-finals to reach their first ever European final.

☐ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Atalanta head into Sunday's Serie A top-five showdown with dejected Roma on the highest of highs after reaching their first ever European final in the greatest night of the club's 117-year history.

Used to punching above their weight, traditionally tiny Atalanta keep reaching new heights under Gian Piero Gasperini and will face Bayer Leverkusen in the Europa League final on May 22 after yet another swashbuckling performance against sorry Marseille on Thursday

In eight brilliant years under Gasperini Atalanta have failed to win the trophy their often thrilling football has deserved but now have the chance to claim two in seven days as they also face Juventus in the Italian Cup on Wednesday.

Just getting to those two finals is a remarkable achievement for a club whose only major honour is the 1963 Italian Cup, while the furthest Atalanta had previously gone in European competition was the last four in the 1988 Cup Winners' Cup when they were a second division

But the rough-and-ready days of Serie B are long gone as the well-organised club led by the local Percassi family continue to progress beyond their station while still staying true to their home town of Bergamo.

Fireworks were fired from behind the stands long before the final whistle at the Gewiss Stadium, their own sparkling new arena and built on the site of the old, ramshackled and cityowned Stadio Atleti Azzurri d'Italia.

When finished, scheduled for the start of next season, the ground will hold 25,000 supporters drawn almost entirely from the city and province of Bergamo, which is nestled at the foot of the Alps and was the epicentre of the Covid-19 pandemic when Atalanta were cruelly denied a Champions League semi-final by Paris Saint-Germain in 2020.

"Maybe the final is between two clubs that don't make the TV companies very happy, but it will give hope to plenty of teams," Gasperini told reporters. 'You can play good football without

having millions of fans all over the world. Football is also about the fans we all saw in the stadium tonight in Bergamo.' A good chunk of those fans will be

shaking off hangovers on Friday

EUROPA LEAGUE SEMI-FINALS, SECOND LEGS At Leverkusen, Germany Leverkusen 2-2 Bayer Leverkusen win 4-2 on aggregate. At Bergamo, Italy Atalanta 3-0 Marseille Atalanta win 4-1 on aggregate

Final: May 22 in Dublin INSIGHTS

Atalanta will face Bayer Leverkusen in the Europa League final on May 22.

Bundesliga champions Leverkusen, who have also reached German Cup final as they chase a treble, are unbeaten in a record 49 games. Atalanta have also reached the Italian Cup final. where they face Juventus.

Atalanta's only major honour is the 1963 Italian Cup, while the furthest Atalanta had previously gone in European competition was the last four in the 1988 Cup Winners' Cup when they were a

second division team. morning after thousands flooded into the centre of Bergamo to celebrate their team's 4-1 aggregate thumping

of Marseille.

Downbeat Roma Their buoyant mood contrasts sharply

with Roma's, who came close to completing a remarkable comeback against Leverkusen in Thursday's other Europa League semi only to suffer late heartbreak in Germany. Daniele De Rossi's team have

been running on fumes for weeks and now have to break back into the top five if they are to qualify for the Champions League for the first time since 2018.

Goal difference separates Roma from Atalanta, who have a game in hand and are nestled in the fifth and final spot for Europe's top club competition, and De Rossi needs to pick his team up following their 4-2 aggregate defeat to never-losing Leverkusen.

Roma's talisman Paulo Dybala sat out Thursday's painful elimination, which came after Leandro Paredes levelled the tie at two apiece with a brace of penalties, and De Rossi said that the Argentina international had not fully recovered from a thigh injury picked up last weekend against Juventus. De Rossi will also be without

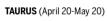
Leonardo Spinazzola on Sunday after the Italy full-back pulled up early on Sunday night as he tries to hold back Atalanta's wave of positivity.

HOROSCOPE



ARIES (March 21-April 19)

ekena expe temperamental ambiance. Consider what you need to feel restored after a busy workweek, opting to nurture yourself and your closest companions rather than attending large social



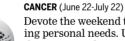


Frustrations could brew if you haven't had much private time recently. Secrets you've been holding onto may suddenly seem too burdensome to carry alone, though you should think twice before impulsively sharing information you've taken care to conceal.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)



You'll be in the mood to treat yourself after a busy workweek, dearest Gemini. Use this energy as an excuse to pursue luxury, though you should steer clear from large social gatherings that could inspire an impulsive spending spree.



ing personal needs. Unfortunately, the day could throw new and unexpected responsibilities your way, making it difficult to find the downtime you crave. Luckily, mid-afternoon presents an opportunity to reconnect with yourself.

LEO (July 23-August 22)



Don't pressure yourself to attend social gatherings or entertain others this weekend, dearest Lion. Your thoughts will wander to new corners of the mind, making it difficult to give others your full attention. Your intuition spikes later

PALM

flight safety.

If Forest

in the top-flight.

better Luton's result

against West Ham they will be on the

brink of securing a third straight year

It has been a rollercoaster season

for Forest, who were charged with

improper conduct by the Football

Association earlier this month after

the club criticised VAR Stuart Attwell

on social media following their defeat

to Everton. Forest boss Nuno Espirito

Santo said he had "already moved on"

after the failed appeal over their



PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

OUTON

B L A B S

VIRGO (August 23-September 22) You'll be particularly sensitive to large crowds today. Give yourself permission to pull back from others if you become agitated or fatigued, listening to your mind, body, and spirit to better understand what you need at the moment.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

36 | 6 | 8 | 22 | 49 | 78 | 26

36 5 9 22 39 74 24

completely today. Your stress levels may elevate especially if you've felt romantically neglected or haven't had enough time for self-care. Separate your professional ambitions from your weekend activities.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)



Everything will feel bigger and more meaningful today. View your situation from multiple angles, but avoid putting unreasonable expectations on yourself. Acknowledge how disorganisation or unhealthy patterns may be holding you back and vow to make changes.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)



Watch out for obsessive behaviours when it comes to any new love interests you've been chasing. The day could trigger jealousy or competitiveness, so strive to find satisfaction with where you are and what you have now.



CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)

upset dear Capricorn. Avoid overextending yourself to mend wounds that don't belong to you for someone who wouldn't return the favour. Plan on a quiet evening at home

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)



Your weekend will be jam-packed, shuffling you

between social engagements and personal errands. Do your best to stay organised taking into consideration what projects or tasks can be put off for another day. Remember the wellness

ly improve over time.



PISCES (February 19-March 20) The day could brew insecurities and emotional rollercoasters, making it important to steer clear of negativity and tense environments. Avoid the temptation to pick your own work

apart, considering instead how you can gradual-

SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY BATING:										

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ACROSS Eatery fare

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- 16 Like a wing 17 Slight
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- (2 wds.) 24 Sibilant sound
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- Separation" 31 Potato chips
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- 42 Pub offering 43 Bluish-green
- 44 Anglo-Saxon laborer 45 Divides
- 48 Wildebeest
- 49 Blush

55 Criticize

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 - 29 Stately 30 Insult 32 Military
 - blockade

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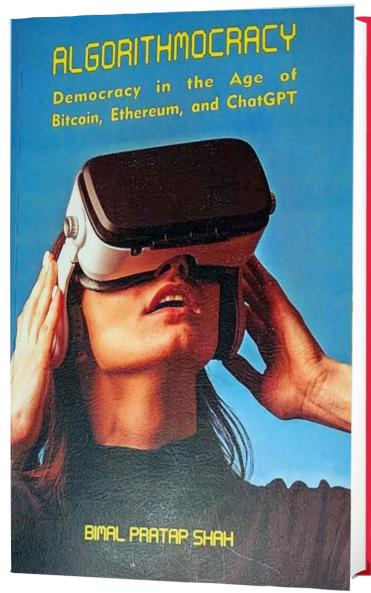
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 - 50 Holiday time 52 Difficult 54 Rejected 56 Luminescence 57 Hindu deity
 - 59 Sword 60 Idem 62 Went very fast 63 Seed cover

58 Old Roman poet

- 64 Walk with effort 67 Recipe meas
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CULTURE & LIFESTYLE



☐ MICHAEL SIDDHI

n November 2022, Nepal conducted its federal election using ballot papers and did not use electronic voting machines, despite having used them in the first constitutional assembly election. Due to the rising concerns about technology affecting the integrity of the election, the Election Commission had to issue a social media code of conduct.

In April 2023, Nepal Rastra Bank banned the use of cryptocurrency including stablecoins, NFTs, Digital Assets, decentralised finance, or any form of virtual currency. Then the Government of Nepal banned TikTok in

Algorithmocracy Author: Bimal Pratap Shah Year: 2023 Publisher: Repro Vision Press

November 2023 to safeguard social

Amidst such digital disruptions, Bimal Pratap Shah, a former employee of the National Information Technology Center, a government fellow at the Center for Electronic Governance and a consultant to the World Bank Nepal, published his book titled 'Algorithmocracy' where he offers a compelling narrative of how emerging technologies like Algorithms, Blockchain, AI &ML, Metaverse will revolutionise the

A fusion of technology, politics, religion and economy

Bimal Pratap Shah's 'Algorithmocracy' discusses how emerging technologies like algorithms, Blockchain and Metaverse will revolutionise the concept of democracy and regulatory frameworks.

concept of democracy, governance & regulatory frameworks.

He deftly explores the intersection of technology, politics, religion and economy and how these concepts merge to create a philosophy that will recalibrate our thought process.

The subtitle, 'Democracy in the Age of Bitcoin, Ethereum and ChatGPT', gives readers ample ideas of what to expect from the book. Shah skillfully dissects complex issues of representative & direct democracy, paradigm shift in governance, new value creation powered by blockchain and failure of our leadership to harness this power which has led to a lack of citizen participation and engage-

ChatGPTdefines Algorithmocracy as a theoretical concept and its feasibility, desirability and potential implications for our society are under debate, highly futuristic and utopian. Viewed from this perspective, the book is ahead of its time and it is fascinating how a Nepali author has created a work that transcends the time barrier.

The book has two parts. Part one is a compilation of Shah's articles published in newspapers covering topics ranging from future technology, shifting para-Metaverse Blockchain, Bitcoin, Ethereum and arcane concepts like Tragedy of the commons, libertarian municipalism, Austrian economics and even imagination of religion in the modern world which he has titled 'Post secular world: Is God Dead?'

The central theme of these articles is how digital transformation is shifting the political system, enabling a direct democratic process while we are pacing the 18th-century world in a bullock cart. It is about the need for political leadership who is fit for the era of self-driving cars, cryptocurrency and city-as-a-platform and understands that the new governance system will ride on blockchain & algorithms leading to direct democracy.

The author shows how advanced the world of AI has become, and he does this by showing a well-written and immaculate article written by ChatGPT on corruption in Nepal.

While technology will become a tonic for freedom and democracy, the author is also careful to mention that it is not a panacea. Shah writes the world needs Magna Carta 2.0 to ensure that technology is used to serve humanity, science, knowledge & democracy.



BOOK REVIEW-

The second part of the book explains the key concepts of digital evolution in simple terms.

Internet and technologies like Bitcoin and cryptocurrency are sovereign neutral and governments don't have control over it. He advocates regulating cryptocurrencies & similar innovations instead of banning them which he expounds is a regressive move.

Referring to Klaus Schwab, the executive chairman of WEF, Shah writes, "It is not - the big fish eat small fish world, but rather - the fast fish eat slow fish world".

The corollary to this statement is that disruptions have become a norm in the 21st century and our organisation, companies, culture, ethos and leadership are vulnerable to the large-scale disruption brought about by technology. It cannot be avoided by prohibiting

The second part of the book explains the key concepts of digital evolution in simple terms which is useful for somebody at the ground level of the digital world. The author explains concepts like Bitcoin, Blockchain & its future, algorithms and the computing world, crypto world personalities like Satoshi Nakamoto and Vitalik Butarin, consensus mechanisms like POW versus POS, FTX, NFTs, direct democracies etc.

The second part is a collection of some existing and some emerging novel ideas from the digital world; some of which are very well explained with relevance while some could have been explained better. Some concepts like how Machine learning works and emerging technologies like sand batteries, sweat-powered smartwatches Xenotransplantation are very

The topics covered are important pieces in the world of technology and the author's expertise on the subject is clearly visible, however, he could have narrated it better by weaving stories around the subject rather than sharing the facts & figures in watertight boxes. For example, readers may not be interested in knowing facts about Silk Road but rather about how Ross Ulbrict operated his illicit operations under the radar.

The book is a trove of knowledge required in the digital age, but it is marred by many copy-editing errors. In several chapters, paragraphs are repeated word-forword as if it is a draft copy. Similarly, errors like inadvertent repetitions, incomplete sentences and changes in font for no discernible reasons hinder the seamless absorption of the book's otherwise abundant wealth of knowledge.

Since the first part of the book is a collection of articles originally published in different newspapers, some ideas and concepts are repeated across chapters.

Despite the copy-editing errors, Bimal's passion & knowledge for technology and harnessing it to drive progress in Nepal is truly inspiring. This book is not only about technology nor is it about politics. But rather about how transformation in technology transforms political values, ideologies, concepts, nations and ethos and gives rise to a new class of techno sapiens.

The book serves as a timely and indispensable guide in delivering political goods and why Nepal has to progressively embrace these changes to reap the benefits of the fourth industrial revolution to avoid a dystopian future. While every technology enthusiast will enjoy reading & learning from Shah's collection of esoteric views, it is a must-read for politicians, policymakers and bureaucrats alike.

Albert Einstein famously said "Imagination is more important than knowledge," which resonates deeply with the thought-provoking concept of Algorithmocracy and how it can potentially reshape the future of societal organisation and pave a path for novel possibilities. Through his book, Shah gives readers a peek into how the future could look like and succeeds in stimulating readers' curiosity & imagination.





Basic Macrame Training Program



A beginner-level macrame training program is scheduled to start on May 16. Macrame involves textile crafting through knotting techniques. Upon completing the training, participants will acquire skills to craft various projects for decoration, fashion, furniture and more.

Where: Macrame Love, Samakhushi, Kathmandu

When: May 16 to May 19 Time: 9:15 am onwards **Entry:** Rs1,900

'Shifting Perspectives' Exhibition

'Shifting Perspectives', is a continued series of 'Melting Paradise', a solo exhibition by Tashi R Ghale at Takpa Gallery. This is a thought-provoking and evocative exhibition aiming to start con-

Where: Takpa Gallery, Lazimpat, Kathmandu When: May 11 to May 26

pm, Friday to Sunday 11:00 am to 7:00 pm

'From Heart to Art' Zine Making Workshop

This beginner-friendly workshop is led by two practising artists and illustrators. Through a variety of activities, collective making and sharing, participants will learn to translate their narratives into visual stories.

Where: Sattya Media Arts Collective, Patan, When: May 11

Time: 11: 00 am to 2: 00 pm **Entry:** Rs1,500

Open Sound Bath Meditation

Avata Wellness is organising a sound-bath meditation which can lead to inner stillness and clarity. Done in groups, this meditation is an immersive experience that can refresh your mind and body.

Where: Avata Wellness, Baluwatar When: May 12 **Time:** 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm Entry: Rs1,500 (members), Rs1,800

Hetauda Art Festival

(non-members)



Saturday Plein Air and Hetauda Sub Metropolitan are organising an art festival in Hetauda. The event will feature an exhibition, paper presentation, live painting demonstration, art discussion and

Where: Siddhartha Hall, Municipality Road, Hetauda

When: May 16 to May 18 **Time:** 11:00 am to 7:00 am Entry: Free

Seeing the World, Saving Sight

Rotary District 3292, along with Create Hope in the World, is hosting fundraising event. feature performances, dancing and food with special appearances by Madan Krishna Shrestha and Hari Bansa

Where: LOD club, Thamel, Kathmandu When: May 16 **Time:** 7:00 pm onwards **Entry:** Rs2,500

Raghav Live in Nepal

Singer Raghav, known for his popular songs such as 'Teri Baton Mein Üljha Jiya', 'Ishq Sava' and 'Desperado', is performing at Prive Nepal on May 17.

Where: Soaltee Hotel, Tahachal Marg, Kathmandu When: May 17 **Time:** 8:00 pm onwards

Entry: Rs3,500 South Asian Women's Conference

2024 The South Asian Women's Conference (SAWC) organised by the International Development Institute and South Asian

Women's Network is happening from May

Where: Hotel Himalaya, Yala Sadak, Lalitpur When: May 12 to May 14

Entry: Free

Guilty or Not Guilty

Katha Ghera (Kausi Theater) is staging a play titled, 'Guilty or Not Guilty' from May 16. The play's story delves deep into the complexities of human

Where: Kausi Theater, Guna Kamdev Marg, Kathmandu

When: May 16 to June 8

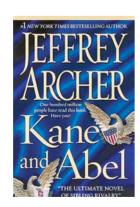
Time: 5:30 pm on weekdays. Extra 1:30 pm

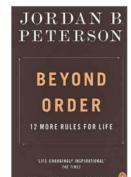
show on Saturday Entry: Rs500

NEW RELEASES **BEST-SELLERS**

Fiction

- Kane and Abel by Jeffrey
- The Inheritance Games by Jennifer Lynn Barnes
- The Missing Sister by Lucinda
- The First to Die at the End by Adam Silvera
- Pachinko by Min Jin Lee





Non-Fiction

- Beyond Order by Jordan Peterson
- Thinking in Bets by Annie Duke Life is Hard by Kieran Setiya
- The Other Side and Back by Sylvia
- The Snowball by Alice Schroeder



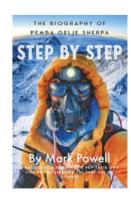
Size Author: Vaclav Smil Price: Rs958 **Publication:** Penguin Books

In 'Size', Vaclav Smil embarks on a thought-provoking exploration of the fundamental law governing our world: size. Through a multidisciplinary lens encompassing history, earth science, psychology and more, Smil delves into the rules, boundaries and intricacies of size. He offers profound insights into key aspects of human existence—such as happiness, prosperity, and health—by examining phenomena ranging from microorganisms to empires, asteroids to economic systems. With meticulous research and expertise, Smil tackles complex issues like income inequality, transmissible diseases and climate change, challenging conventional wisdom and offering fresh



Lady Tan's Circle of Women Author: Lisa See **Price:** Rs1,278 Publication: Scribner

Lisa See's enthralling historical fiction 'Lady Tan's Circle of Women' chronicles the remarkable life of Tan Yunxian, a 15th-century female physician in China. Despite societal norms that devalue educated women, Yunxian learns Chinese medicine from her grandmother. Alongside her loyal friend Meiling, she defies cultural constraints to aid women in need. But Yunxian's arranged marriage limits her to conventional responsibilities and keeps her from helping others as much. However, she sets out on a mission to help women from all walks of life, determined to break free and make a significant contribution to society. Through Yunxian's journey, See skilfully portrays theme of female solidarity.



Step by Step Author: Mark Powell Price: Rs958 Publication: Penguin Books

The fascinating biography 'Step by Step' by Mark Powell delves into the remarkable life of renowned Nepalese mountaineer and guide, Pemba Gelje Sherpa. From his humble beginnings in a Nepalese village to global recognition, Pemba's journey is a testament to human resilience and determination. With a record-breaking ascent of twenty-one peaks over 8,000 meters, including multiple conquests of Everest and a World Record for the fastest ascent of Manaslu, Pemba's achievements are awe-inspiring. Through candid conversations during a trek to Everest Base Camp, Powell masterfully captures Pemba's essence—his values, vision and dedication to preserving the Himalayas and uplifting his community.

07 | SATURDAY, MAY 11, 2024

A duad of fresh cinematic experiences

In the recently concluded Nepal European Union Film Festival (NEUFF), 'The Bull, the Cow and the Calf' won the special mention award and 'Dhye Dreams' won the Best Short Documentary.

Tales of a broken family



The film epitomises how budget, experience or crew limits don't impede the creation of an impactful story.

SCREENGRAB VIA YOUTUBI

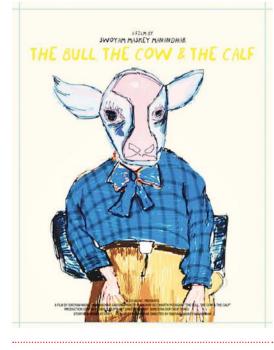
DEEPALI SHRESTHA

is always a delight to witness fresh perspectives in films by young filmmakers who are only testing the waters and figuring things out. Embarking on a filmmaking journey with little experience and an awfully tight budget is no easy feat. However, these limitations offer advantages, too. Neither expectations nor administrative hurdlers confine your creativity, and you can explore, experiment and most importantly, make mistakes and learn from them.

If we watch what the now-renowned filmmakers came up with when they started their filmmaking journey (I am thinking of works like 'Two Cars, One Night' by Taika Waititi and 'Bottle Rocket' by Wes Anderson), their works reflect honesty, passion and sheer determination even if they lack finesse. More often than not, the message and conflict in the do-it-yourself films are no less powerful than professional films. Such films feel fresh, as these independent filmmakers pay attention to issues without the grandeur or larger-than-life element prevalent in commercial films.

The Bull, the Cow and the Calf' is one such film that caught my attention at the 13th edition of the Nepal European Union Film Festival (NEUFF) 2024. Swoyam Maskey Manandhar's directorial debut, the 13-minute film won the special mention award at the

Manandhar's directorial debut 'The Bull, the Cow and the Calf' is anchored around two families of high and low classes.



The Bull, the Cow and the Calf **Director:** Swoyam Maskey Manandhar

Duration: 13 minutes Language: Nepali

NEUFF short film competition. The 13th edition of NEUFF, organised at the CDC Mall in Kathmandu under the theme 'Fifty Years of EU-Nepal Relations: Celebrating Cultural Diversity', ran from March 20, 2023, to April 20, 2023.

Nine European Films and 11 Nepali short films were screened during the festival, which then went to Sudurpaschim Province, Lumbini Province and Karnali Province last month

The narrative of 'The Bull, the Cow and the Calf' is anchored around two families of high and low classes. As the film begins, we are taken to a modest house, where the mother (Sarisma Khatri Pudasaini), the father (Siddhartha Pudasaini) and the son (Sworup Raj Ghimire) getting ready for the day ahead. Through this opening scene, the filmmakers haven't wasted much time in allowing us to understand the idea behind the film's title. The father, representing the bull, scolds the calf, the son, for tearing his jersey's shorts and the mother, the cow, tries to

Through the mother, Sarita, who works as a housemaid in an upper-middle-class family, we meet another bull, cow and calf trio. The new family features a mother, Sheela (Santoshi Paudel), who is often consumed with her professional commitments and a father, Amrit (Alexandar Sunny Jaiswal), who is resentful of his workaholic wife and how she has no time for their son, Aman (Prasanna Khatri).

When Sheela says that she has to visit Rupandehi for training sessions and urges her husband to invest more time in their son, he becomes infuriated, and a heated discussion about who should spend more time

with the child follows. Both husband and wife exude the sophistication of a modern couple in Kathmandu as they exchange arguments blending English and Nepali and use acronyms of slang like "BS", reflecting their urbanite demeanour.

This scene is particularly interesting, as it offers a poignant reflection of the disarray regarding parenting in contemporary urban households where both the husband and wife possess a myopic focus towards their individual professional growth, resulting in a breeding ground for familial misunderstanding and neglect. Even though their discussion revolves around the son's well-being, his presence gets camouflaged as the parents become blinded by their self-centric arguments. In reality, the child is still there, in the thick of the dispute, becoming a passive observer of the escalating tension in the house.

As the film follows the housemaid, it appears as if she is the protagonist, but her role is only confined to guiding the narrative from one scene to the other. The housemaid could be the main character since the frame follows her, but the film isn't only about her point of view. This lack of distinction between the main character and the protagonist gives unconventionality to the film's storytelling which could be a challenging approach, especially for short films, as the story needs to be clear in a limited amount of

Still, even with this unconventionality, the scenes have managed to be thought-provoking and memorable. Manandhar's debut screenplay is praiseworthy as most of the scenes have a purpose in the overall story, and the dialogues aren't irrelevant, which is a difficult thing to pull off at the first attempt.

Although the character of the father from the welloff family feels a bit out of tune with the rest of the characters, most of the actors have done a decent job, even with limited or no acting experience. The issues they talk about and the life they portray feel within our reach as they remind us of people we know in our daily lives.

The film's title seems to have been borrowed from the Nepali saying "Saandhe ko judhai, bachchha ko michai", which roughly translates to "when bulls fight, the calf gets trampled". The illustration of how the misunderstanding between parents leads to the crossfire and become the victims is at the heart of 'The Bull, the Cow and the Calf'.

The portrayal of this triangular conflict between the father, mother and their child is the element that stands out in the film. Manandhar has skillfully depicted this with a clever parallelism between two families of different social statuses where although the parents have rows about different matters, the children become victims in the same manner, depicting the universality of this issue.

Furthermore, the film also tries to highlight the intricacies of two different women belonging to two different classes and their dynamics with their husbands as they navigate their lives amidst financial hardships or career aspirations. Sheela, the mother from an upper-middleclass family, has the double burden of committing to her job and looking after her son.

Whereas Sarita is trying whatever she can to provide for her family, her attempts are constantly met with her husband's disgruntlement. In both cases, the men exude varying degrees of ego and are resentful of how their wives are going about their lives. This is perfectly depicted when Sarita's husband sees her bring the old shirt of Sheela's husband and the t-shirt of their son, Aman and he admonishes her, saying, "You were their slave, now you have also started begging!"

There are some instances where the film falters. Since the primary motive of the film is to portray the impact of parental conflict on children, it would have been more effective had the makers focused more on the child's perspective. Although the makers have tried to show another level of the haves and havenots through the scene with the beggar, it does not add much to the story's crux. Moreover, by touching on different themes in a short time, the film could risk obscuring its core message.

As the credits roll in, the film lets us reflect on the familial dynamics we were surrounded by when we grew up. Overall, the film offers awareness of children's vulnerability during any household discord through a gripping portrayal of their silent ordeal. With simplistic cinematography and minimal embellishments, the makers have highlighted a critical issue through 'The Bull, the Cow and the Calf'.

The film epitomises how budget, experience or crew limitations don't impede the creation of an impactful story as long as it is handled with sincerity and passion. This film could serve as an inspiration to all the aspiring filmmakers out there who desire to create something but do not have enough resources



Shrestha is pursuing her bachelor's in media studies at Kathmandu University.

Tackling climate change denial

AARATI RAY

limate change is not real, it is a distant problem and it's not going to affect us' Sounds familiar, right? You might have heard this while talking to someone about climate change. But, it is already affect-

'Dhye Dreams', winner of the Best Short Documentary at NEUFF (Nepal European Union Film Festival) 2024, brings attention to the climate crisis which is often neglected. Directed by Shanta Nepali, this 27-minute film introduces viewers to the climate struggles faced by Dhye Village in the upper Mustang of Western Nepal.

The documentary opens with a sweeping view of the bleak, dark and beautiful landscape of Dhye Village located at 3900 m which screams pensiveness. Bleak and beautiful landscape, abandoned settlements, fading civilisation and a handful of desperate survivors set out to rebuild their lives in the new world—all feel like the perfect masala script of a post-apocalyptic movie or fiction.

Unfortunately, for the few left villagers of Dhye, who are the first recognised cases of 'climate refugees' in Nepal, life is grimmer than fiction; they are already living in a post-apocalyptic world of 'climate

In the documentary, audiences are introduced to the struggle and story of three resilient women fighting against their fate and surviving climate change, Kunchok Dolkar, Lhakpa Choezon and Sonam Sangmo in Dhye which have lost much of its water

Dolkar, aged 55, is one of the few people left in Dhye Village. The matriarch of a big family of 13 lives alone most of the time in the village, with her husband and children visiting sometimes. Due to the water crisis, her family, like many other villagers, has moved to other areas like Chambaleh (at 3300

lar heavy rainfall results in frequent floods, with nearby Kagbeni village being washed away just last year, located a mere 35 km from Sangmo's apple orchard.

Sangmo's line, "I go and check the river level before going to sleep every night," serves as a sombre reminder of how Chambaleh, too, is vulnerable to becoming a post-apocalyptic world and facing

Through this part, the documentary implicitly poses a pressing question to the government and world leaders, "Where will Sangmo and the villagers go when the next flood hits? How much longer will they have to migrate, and where will they go?

Another standing point of the documentary is that it is well-researched and has truly captured the reality of the fading dreams of Dhye village. It aligns with studies showing drying water sources, unpredictable weather, and changes in vegetation, forcing the community to leave their ancestral lands. Over successive years, 23 households have resettled but this is only a temporary solution.

The documentary, filmed over six months, provides an in-depth view of the lives of climate refugees. It showcases not only their efforts in planting crops and apples but also the harvest period, offering a deeper understanding of the challenges they face due to climate change. This relatability makes the decrease in produce and farming challenges more tangible for the audience.

Despite lacking elaborate sets, dramatic dialogue, conflict, or grand music, this documentary packs a powerful punch. It resonates deeply because it stays true to reality, portraying characters genuinely grap pling with the challenges of climate change.

The stunning aerial view shots of the wide landscapes, close-up shots of beautiful but heart-wrenching smiles of Dolkar, Choezon and Sangmo against the backdrop of adversity, and the melodious and stirring traditional music in the background make it



Climate migrants of Chambaleh village in their daily struggle of rerouting the river to be safe from the looming threat of flood.

'Dhye Dreams' spotlights the global crisis of climate-displaced communities in Upper Mustang of Nepal.

metres in Mustang), in search of water, food and

Even though life is becoming increasingly challenging, Dolkar refuses to leave Dhye. She's determined to stay connected to her roots and is unwilling to witness Dhye, once bustling with laughter and smiles, become deserted.

The scene where Dolkar's husband, Jamyang Wangchuk, standing on the dry riverbed reminisces about the time when he and villagers would swim in a pond brimming with water brings a sense of nostalgia and loss for the audience highlighting the depleting natural sources because of climate change.

With Wangchuk's words, "If everybody leaves in the future, all the hard work of our people to build this village will go in vain", the audience is yet again reminded of the cruel fact that climate displacement is more than just about people migrating; it's about people leaving home, their roots, heritage and cul-

Climate displacement represents more than just the loss of one community—it's the erosion of generations of culture and civilisation.

Director, Nepali has skillfully presented multiple perspectives in the documentary. In Dhye Village, while most of the remaining residents are elderly, there are also individuals like Choezon, aged 35, who has been living in Dhye since she was sixteen years

Choezon, busy caring for her in-laws and tending her wheat fields, walks miles to fetch water from Chambaleh. Despite her hectic days, she can't ease the anxiety of being separated from her children, who attend school far away due to their village school being closed.

Similar to Dolkar, Choezon also holds onto hope for Dhye's improvement and reuniting with her family. However, both know deep inside that, "they may never return to this place of suffering."

Unlike many documentaries that only focus on emptying places due to the climate crisis, 'Dhye Dreams' provides a more comprehensive view of the reality of climate refugees and migrants. Nepali has depicted not only the residents of Dhye village but also those of the newly formed settlement in Chambaleh, giving viewers a fuller understanding of

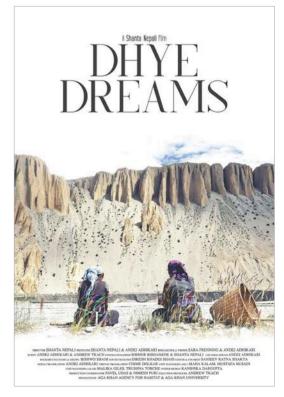
Many people from Dhye and other climate-affected villages in Mustang, including 40-year-old Sangmo, migrated to Chambaleh due to its access to water. Starting anew, Sangmo has been living in Chambaleh for four years, where she cultivates apples and sells tea to support her children's education and sustain

The weather in Chambaleh is highly unpredictable, leading to a decline in apple production each year for villagers like Sangmo. Additionally, irregu-

Contrary to its title, 'Dhye Dreams' depicts the stories and fading dreams of climate change victims like Dolkar and Choezon, who strive to combat climate challenges and remain rooted in their homeland. It also portrays climate migrants like Sangmo, vival. While some old dreams fade and new ones emerge, all of them are in the same fight to survive and preserve their centuries-old traditions, cultures, and identities which are slowly fading.

'Dhye Dreams' serves as a stark reminder and urgent alarm to dispel the notion that climate change is distant or fake. It's a wake-up call that the post-apocalyptic scenarios depicted in fiction are already a reality for many; it is the reality of millions of people worldwide who are struggling to even meet their basic needs as a result of global threat climate change.

In a time when Nepal is currently battling climate-induced wildfires, heatwaves, pollution, and displacement, 'Dhye Dreams' is a must-watch for all to learn about the grave problem of climate change. Beyond a documentary, it is also an urgent reminder for government, stakeholders and leaders to deal with the climate crisis as soon as possible or else the whole world will soon turn to dystopian post-apoca-



Dhye Dreams

Director: Shanta Nepali Executive Producer: Andrew Tkach **Duration:** 27 minutes

Language: English



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