In other news

Two were not all consumed by the coronavirus pandemic at the moment, we would be worrying about the impact of climate change. Hopefully sooner, rather than later, the COVID-19 outbreak will fade away.

We will then have to go back to where we left off to address a far greater long-term threat not just to human beings, but also all other species on this planet. In January, just as first reports were coming out of a virus outbreak in Wuhan scientists were issuing dire predictions about how the land, air and sea was warming much faster than previously thought – and how this would have catastrophic impact on life on Earth. Millions would die of heat stress, climate migrants would be driven out of coastal cities, food supplies would run out with droughts and floods, there would be continental-scale fires. But politicians in many countries continued to be in denial.

When the coronavirus crisis is over, the world has to show the same resolve in addressing the root causes of the climate emergency, and cut emissions, allow forests to grow back, alter food habits, change the consumption patterns and endless consumerism. Time will tell if world governments will learn from the pandemic to act together with the resolve they have not yet shown in dealing with the climate crisis.

Here in Nepal, the virus has not spread as aggressively as elsewhere. We do not know why. Maybe it is just lurking underrated, waiting for the right moment to strike. But this much vilified government has shown an uncharacteristic resolve in risking economic collapse to prevent the spread of the virus. That same determination is needed to address the climate crisis.

How much fossil fuel Nepal burns is not making a big difference on the planet, but our dependence on imported petroleum is going to add to the huge economic burden of the pandemic. Nepal has to reduce its development model, switch to renewable energy, aim for agricultural self-sufficiency (see editorial, page 2), and halt destructive infrastructure construction. All this demands visionary leadership and good governance which is in short supply. The impact of the climate emergency is already being felt throughout Nepal making glacial ice means too much water in some places, and in others springs have gone dry due to extreme weather events. As Ranjit Bhandari reports in this issue (page 8-9) Nepal needs to mitigate the danger of glacial lake bursts, as well as help farmers adapt to erratic monsoons and water scarcity. But it needs to cut fossil fuel to save the economy.

The reduction of global emissions due to the worldwide lockdown is temporary. China has already announced reverting to coal to kick-start its economy as it revives after the pandemic (page 8-9). Other nations will try to rectify up fossil fuel extraction.

Like the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis needs a global strategy. Here in Nepal we need local action. Kunda Dixit

BACK TO THE FUTURE OF FARMING

EDITORIAL

PAGE 2

GLACIAL RETREAT:
The Himalayan peaks have grown 7 times in size in the past 15 years, threatening the Tamakoshi Valley downstream. There are a few areas after dangerously low glacial lakes in the Nepal Himalaya.
Back to the future of farming

The COVID-19 lockdown by the government is an effort at ‘primary protection’, and builds on the experience of how other countries have flattened the peak. Nepal has taken the lockdown in earnest, perhaps because of the hardship suffered during past ‘bandits’ as well as the earthquake and Blockade of 2015.

A survey last week showed that there is strong support for the measures the government has taken against COVID-19. Awareness about the virus and what we must do to protect ourselves is high. But people are afraid of the disease, and are worried about the future.

Indeed, as a nation we must now look beyond the duration of the lockdown. Long-term quarantine period to matters related to food security and employment. Job loss in the country and a slump in overseas employment will introduce gross social distress.

While employment generation in a medium to long-term concern, investment in sustainable agricultural production, ensuring a fair price for farmers, and access to market. The climate and well of Nepal are fertile and productive, but past neglect, the drift of educated youth away from the land, and now the climate crisis has affected agricultural production.

Across Nepal, fields and terraces are barren or are reverting to jungle. The elderly are left managing the farm, while others move to the roadhead for schooling, or lying felled. In the Tarai, once Nepal’s grain basket, agricultural activity is affected by urbanisation, salination and depletion of ground water.

And now we have a pandemic lockdown. The message that has got to go out that farming work cannot wait, and it is to be told in the fields (see page 4). Some farmers are waking up to 4AM to bring in the harvest, such necessity is not needed. It is the main planting season, and that should be allowed to go ahead as normal.

A group of nine eminent citizens this week put out an Appeal on Agriculture:

Save the Farm, Empower Farmers, Enhance Agriculture which insists that agriculture is an essential activity during the COVID-19 crisis. It also urged the government to embark on a long-term strategy to make farming sustainable and employmen
teed over time.

There is a surplus of milk and vegetables right now, and immediate action needs to be taken to ensure that there is market access for both consumers and producers. The government must support distribution, and Nepal’s vaunted cooperative sector which has mostly concentrated in money lending must come forward as a partner.

Farming in Nepal has suffered depletion of resources and interest, which is why Nepal has turned to food export to an importer of foodstuffs. It is not enough, of course, to ask citizens to go back to the land. Farming has to be made attractive and profitable as a profession.

It is clear that those who have abandoned farming will not go back to the back-breaking work of their parents and ancestors. Young people who remain on the farm are seen by society as failures in life. This attitude needs to change.

The coronavirus pandemic provides Nepal with an opportunity to bring back agriculture as a pillar of the economy, providing employment and food security for the people and self-sufficiency to the nation. Nepal can create jobs in the service industry and manufacturing, but not those with enough for the volume of returns from farm in Malaysia and India due to the global economic downturn.

Farming must adjust to new realities and find a mix between traditions and innovation. For example, the organic produce could open up as a good source for internal consumption as well as export, as has already begun to happen. System of Rice Intensification to raise paddy harvests, mechanized agriculture, new methods of irrigation, from drip farming to aquaponic agriculture must be promoted. While we must try to keep indigenous seeds, we must not shut ourselves off from new cash crops suited to Nepal’s diverse topography and climate.

The world economy and industrial agriculture has an answer to this path because of the way it damaged nature. Going back to normal after the pandemic subsides is not an option. It is an important lesson.

Agriculture Minister Ghanshyam Bhusal must take it as a campaign to restore priority to the kind of farming that can create, distribute income, ensure sustainability and resilience to fight the next crisis the world throws at us.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

In the issue No 877 15 April 2010 Times Nepal, 10 years ago, we joined in solidarity written by Achari Bandhu Nartini: Nepal was the last democracy in the region. From its beginning in 1990 the country was in the middle of a war.

The year 2020 is going down in history as a time when Nepal moved more and the same as the world.

This year, the times we have not been ready for a year of revolution. Difficulty and a lot of story.

While the time and the hard is to bring about the changes. The time is not longer meant to accumulate and accumulate expectation. Skill down to a pocket to make sure the change to the same is needed.

The people have long been aware of the need for change. But the time to bring about the changes is not the same. The time is not the same.

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The plane flew in an elegant arc and landed without incident. The crew's relief was palpable as they reported that all passengers were safe and well. The plane was rejoined by the relief crew, and the passengers were greeted with smiles and words of appreciation. The plane taxied to the terminal, where it was met by officials and published its arrival details. The airport was bustling with activity as passengers disembarked and made their way to the baggage claim. The luggage was quickly loaded onto carts, and the passengers were escorted to their transportation. The scene was one of joy and relief as the passengers were reunited with their families and friends. The airport was a hive of activity as the plane prepared for its next flight.
Arot Chitrakar

in Bhatapurna was cancelled, Mochhinchaut charhit pulling is unlikely and even India intra looks iffy. We will be locked in our homes for Nepal New Year Day on 13 April. So far, Nepal has been lucky, thanks to the efforts of spreading in our communities we need to take steps today. Keep the sky to sky lockdown rules, maintain physical distance even within the family. It is not just to protect ourselves but to protect others. Three actions have to be at the level of the individual, community, as well as at all levels of government. The idea is simple. You plantistogram, you harvest it after the monsoon, you make gifts, sell it and get money. The family to have new clothes and sweet are, if you do nothing now, it will not be a viable festival. And Nepal’s festivals are intimately tied to our crop cycles. The rains have been good to Nepal this winter, and we have to believe that the monsoon will arrive on time and stay strong.

The current maize-planting season and the upcoming rainy season are opportunities to ensure that Nepal goes green and ensure food security for Nepal at these difficult and uncertain times (see Editorial, page 2). The government should be proactively telling farmers that the lockdown does not include them, so long as they maintain physical distance.

Our talk tells us that Kathmandu Valley once suffered a 12-year drought and the Boudhanathstupa was built with dew drops and hence called Akash – the dew drop stops. Droughts are nothing new, but they may get more severe and frequent in future with the climate crisis.

Nepal’s agricultural infrastructure during the lockdown will yield dividends far into the future, keep us fed, make us more self-reliant and resilient.

Work for Food

Upkeep of agriculture during the lockdown will keep Nepal fed, make the country more self-reliant and resilient.

Could anti-TB vaccine be protecting Nepalis?

Prothra Pokharel

Researchers have puzzled about why while the COVID-19 pandemic ravages China, Europe and now North America, low incidence cases in Slovakia have so far recorded fewer cases.

Public health experts say that is the poorer countries just do not have enough kits to screen populations at risk for the virus. But others maintain that even if there were a lot of infected people around, the coronavirus is not spreading in the subcontinent as aggressively as elsewhere.

There are many theories floating around to explain this, including the ‘hygiene hypothesis’ which seems to show that South Asians have developed a resistance to new viruses because the environment is not as sterile as in industrialised countries. Other scientists have speculated that countries with a high incidence of malaria seem to be relatively less affected, and have even proposed that malaria.

The theory that appears more plausible is that people in countries that administer the anti-malarial vaccine BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guérin) seem to be less susceptible to COVID-19. Even before this pandemic, there had been epidemiological studies that indicated higher immune levels in people with BCG than in susceptible individuals, including viral infections.

Could Nepali have a relatively low case of novel coronavirus? As attributed to the BCG vaccine which has been widely used in the population for the past few decades? The BCG vaccine campaign started in Nepal in 1979 under Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) programme and the World Health Organization (WHO), and since then millions of Nepalis have been inoculated with it. The rates of morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 vary greatly in different parts of the world, and scientists have been trying to understand why. For example countries like Italy, the Netherlands and the United States that never had a comprehensive BCG vaccination program appear to be disproportionately impacted. There are now test going on in several laboratories in Europe to see if this is indeed true.

“If you superimpose a map of the world with coronavirus countries that had a BCG vaccine program, there seems to be a less virulent spread of COVID-19 countries that inoculated children against tuberculosis. The number of cases may still be high, but the fatality rate is lower in BCG countries,” explains Sannse Mani Dixit, a researcher at the Centre for Molecular Dynamics in Kathmandu.

He adds that the BCG is not an anti-virus vaccine, but seems to build the body’s immunity not just against tuberculosis, but also from viral infections. Recent research suggests that live-but-shedded vaccine like BCG stimulates the immune system and protects against wide range of diseases. It is also important to note that the vaccine is by no means perfect, as it prevents about 60% of TB cases among children. In addition, the vaccine is less effective in preventing TB that affects the lungs and works better against severe forms of TB, such as tuberculosis meningitis. BCG vaccine’s effectiveness against COVID-19 is a hypothesis that is yet to be tested, researchers are starting clinical trials in Australia, the Netherlands and Germany that should answer the question. Dr. BCG in the future. The trials will be conducted on people at high risk of exposure, primarily health care personnel.

Rudding said that the new findings at Patan Hospital believes that without randomised clinical trials, the trials are not enough to show causal linkages, especially when there are so many confounding variables. Until then nothing is said until the clinical trials are out.

Furthermore, it is also necessary to know for how long does the positive effects induced by BCG lasts in the immune system, Nepalis vaccinated with BCG as infants, would then protect against COVID-19. However, a vigilant eye on the number of novel coronavirus cases in the BCG vaccinated countries is important.

An exponential spread of COVID-19 cases in India could knock out the hypothesis completely, and there is also no explanation why China which has near universal BCG coverage was so badly hit by the virus. We could be seeing a straw, hoping that the BCG vaccine will save the day, but the authorities of the hypothesis completely, and there is also no explanation why China which has near universal BCG coverage was so badly hit by the virus. We could be seeing a straw, hoping that the BCG vaccine will save the day, but the authorities of the hypothesis completely.
Epicentre of two disasters in West Nepal

Besides preparing for a possible COVID-19 outbreak, western Nepal also has to be ready for a future mega-earthquake.

Sonia Awale

W ith the detection of three new COVID-19 cases in Kathmandu district on Saturday, one of the country’s first cases of community transmission, western Nepal could be the epicentre for two disasters: a coronavirus hot spot and a ticking time bomb for a mega-earthquake. This is not scare-mongering. Public health experts say western Nepal’s rudimentary healthcare system will be overwhelmed by a possible COVID-19 outbreak because at least 120,000 Nepali workers have returned from India without screening before both countries went into lockdown. The government’s rapid diagnostic testing in hospitals in Nepalgunj, Dhankuta, Sankhu and the remote districts may not be a surge in positive cases in the days ahead.

However, there is another Dunodde’s Sword that has been hanging over the region even before a novel coronavirus—the likelihood of a catastrophic mega-earthquake. As Nepal marks the fifth anniversary of its 2015 earthquake, seismologists have warned that an even bigger megathrust is not a question of “if but when.”

The rift between Pikaha and Nepal’s western border with India has not had a major earthquake since 1950 when it was estimated 8.8 magnitude killed over 25,000 people. The population including the king and queen had converted the debris from the catastrophic flood on which Pikaha city is situated.

Speaking with Nepal Times, seismologist Roger Bilham warned five years ago that the 2015 was not the Big One. He said the seismic gap in western Nepal had accumulated tremendous tectonic strain that had not been released for 500 years, and an earthquake was long overdue.

There’s a plenty of stress stored for an earthquake above 8 magnitude in western Nepal, and it could kill at least 100,000 people in Nepal alone, says Surey Narayan Shrestha of the National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET). “But despite being the most at risk, western Nepal is least prepared and has relatively low awareness about earthquake safety, and this doubles its vulnerability,” he said.

In two weeks, Nepal will mark the fifth anniversary of the 23 April 2015 earthquake, yet neither the government nor the people seem to have learnt the lesson. Western Nepal, in particular, is ill-equipped to handle another major earthquake. As an 8.5 magnitude quake in western Nepal would be felt even more strongly in Kathmandu Valley than the 7.8 magnitude five years ago. Still, disaster preparedness experts say attention should now turn from the 14 districts in Central Nepal affected in 2015 to western Nepal. Before the COVID-19 lockdown, NSET with support from development partners had begun to retrofit 2,200 classrooms in 200 schools in four western districts (Bardia, Sankhu, Jumla and Achham) to be completed in four years. Prior to 2015, NSET had similarly retrofitted 300 schools inside Kathmandu Valley which survived the earthquake and served as emergency shelters. However, nearly 8,000 schools were completely destroyed in 2015, and colossal loss of lives was averted only because the earthquake struck on a Saturday.

“NSET selected the schools in western Nepal based on vulnerability, potential for replication, availability of resources and enthusiasm of the school management committee,” said Shrestha. “Next step to scale this up and this means more investment, technical support and massive mobilisation of human resources.”

Hospital in western Nepal at the moment are all on red alert for a possible outbreak of COVID-19 in the region and healthcare workers are keenly aware of shortages of life-saving medical equipment such as test kits, ventilators, ICU beds, oxygen and personal protective gear. In an event of a major earthquake, this situation will be even worse because the hospital buildings themselves may be damaged.

Three components within a healthcare facility determine its earthquake preparedness during an earthquake, the building, state of power supply and medical equipment, and an emergency preparedness system with available stockpile for mass casualties.

Dasdahol hospital has been identified as a disaster management hub in Far West Nepal with satellite facilities to other district hospitals. “For the kind of earthquake projected here, none of us is prepared, western Nepal the least of all. We might have big hospitals in city centre but on the periphery the buildings withstand the quake is the real question,” says Bishak Gurung of the city-based Aavin Foundation.

Few weeks before the earthquake struck in 2015, Bajya hospital had undergone reconstruction to turn the institution into an eco-friendly, earthquake-resistant building. A disaster management protocol was also drawn up for its emergency, as well as in and out patient buildings.

Nepal’s rescue teams and hospitals in the Far West have been prepared for multiple disasters: “We can scale up and add a resource every time a disaster strikes, be it the coronavirus or an earthquake. We need a standard operating protocol based on concrete national guidelines.”

Back in 2003, Nepal government in collaboration with WHO had conducted earthquake vulnerability assessment of 15 major hospitals across the country that recommended they all be retrofitted. More than 15 years later, except from minor strengthening of health clinics, nothing has been done.

Hope now rests on the newly formed National Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Authority (DIMA) which will replace the National Reconstruction Authority set up after 2015. Experts hope the focus will now shift to strengthening infrastructure of public buildings, transmission lines, telecommunications, sewerage and water supply.

Surey Narayan Shrestha at NSET says the experience of 2015 shows why our hospitals in Far West Nepal are mostly stuck in the reconstruction of residential building and heritage sites in Central Nepal. Our priority now is on reinforcing infrastructure and ensuring essential services are better equipped to survive the next big one.”

Preparing to be prepared

N epal was just beginning preparations for risk reduction and management at disasters like earthquakes, floods, sanitation and epidemics when the 2015 earthquake struck. This year, the Disaster Management Authority (DIMA) has been formed which aims to integrate different kinds of disasters Nepal is exposed to.

As of 2015, Nepal was able to scale up in a rapid way in the Terai. Two years later, no one died in a similar cold wave. The Home Ministry’s Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Working Committee is credited with such preparations for Bihar, heat and cold waves and extreme floods.

An average of 700 people die every year in Nepal due to disasters, most of these are weather-related. The climate crisis is exacerbating extreme winter events, and the ministry has drawn up a Master Emergency Workplan to address increased frequency and intensity of floods.

“We have to be prepared and preparation is more effective when it is at the local level since they are the first responders,” says KSt Patwal of the DIPA. With the help of the British Aid agency BDF and the World Food Programme (WFP) the government is setting up Humanitarian Starting Kiosks in all seven provinces for quick-relief and relief material for disasters. The central station was opened at Kathmandu airport during the 2015 earthquake.

New stations in Butwal and Ramshahi were inaugurated by British Ambassador Nicola Pollitt and WFP’s Tara Lakshmi recently.
**SELF-ISOLATION**

**Suggested Books:**

- *Thamel*
  - In this beguiling biography of a neighborhood transformed by globalization and inextricably intertwined with the lives of real people—a roaming junkie, a band member, a sex worker, a generation of shopkeepers—Rabi Thapa tells a poignant tale of the city we live in.

- *Lost in Transition*
  - KJ Chaudhri Gutam’s book offers a candid critique of what all Nepalis’ politics, economy, and how to rebuild the country from the ruins of the prolonged armed conflict that pushed us into protracted transition, as well as the 2015 Nepal earthquake.

**QUARANTINE**

**Suggested Movies on the Dish:**

- *Zootopia*
  - In this animated kid’s movie, a crooked bunny cop and a cynical con artist must work together to uncover a conspiracy in a city of anthropomorphic animals.

- *Pitch Perfect*
  - Beca, a freshman at Barden University, is called into saving the Bellas, her school’s all-girls a cappella group, and taking on their male rivals in a campus competition.

- *The Count of Monte Cristo*
  - A young man, falsely imprisoned by his jealous friend, escapes and uses a hidden treasure to make his revenge. Based on Alexandre Dumas’ literary classic.

- *Bio*
  - When Bia, a domesticated mouse from small-town Minnesota, meets the fiercely independent Jewell, she takes off on an adventure to Rio de Janeiro with the bird of his dreams. Worthy with you kids.

**CONTAINMENT**

**Podcasts we like:**

- **The False Nine**
  - A 90s in style town to discuss all things football, from the European Leagues to the Nepali national team. Find The False Nine on Apple Podcasts.

- **The Asian Madness Podcast**
  - Discussions about true crime, superstition, urban legends, mysteries, and weird news from across the Asian continent.

- **The Road**
  - Cormac McCarthy’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about a father and his son’s journey toward the sea, set after an unspecified extinction event has wiped out most of humanity.

- **The World Without Us**
  - In this non-fiction eco-thriller, Alan Weisman dives into the minutiae of how our planet will change if mankind was wiped off its feet.

- **The Princess Bride**
  - Featured as one of an abridged tangle of a cult/classic in the fabric of our minds. William Goldman’s modern fantasy classic is 30 years old, and its characters you won’t soon forget.

**Going places together - qatarairways.com**

- **1005 - PM2.5**
  - A look at the current pollution and what we can do to reduce it. Available on Times.

- **Air Quality Index**
  - Kathmandu, 3 - 9 April

- **Ecológia**
  - With the recent pandemic: a huge cost to human life and economy around the world. Many recent virus outbreaks, including COVID-19, have been linked to the wildlife trade. People hunt and trade animals for food, medicine and trophies and in the process cause the destruction and decline of many species and their habitats. It is a part of an ecosystem that is complex and relies on a balance of plants, animals and marine life. Their destruction also affects us... and our survival.

- **Air Quality Index**
  - Kathmandu, 3 - 9 April

- **Kripa Joshi**
  - The recent pandemic has been a huge cost to human life and economy around the world. Many recent virus outbreaks, including COVID-19, have been linked to the wildlife trade. People hunt and trade animals for food, medicine and trophies and in the process cause the destruction and decline of many species and their habitats. It is a part of an ecosystem that is complex and relies on a balance of plants, animals and marine life. Their destruction also affects us... and our survival.

- **Okja**
  - Earlier this year, South Korean black comedy, *Okja*, garnered accolades at film festivals and for its powerful commentary on the impact of animal agriculture. In a heart-wrenching story of a teenage girl who risks it all to save the life of a giant, genial pig named Okja.

- **Our Pick**
  - Earlier this year, South Korean black comedy, *Okja*, garnered accolades at film festivals and for its powerful commentary on the impact of animal agriculture. In a heart-wrenching story of a teenage girl who risks it all to save the life of a giant, genial pig named Okja.

- **Stuff You Should Know**
  - Join the hosts as they get to the bottom of old questions, like what the chaos theory is, if animals exist and more.
Unlocking yourself during the lockdown

I t is Week 3 of the lockdown, and we have started missing our morning jogs and mourning for our expensive gym memberships. Home workouts always sound like an unrealistic and ineffective solution, but with an informative and encouraging app by your side, they can actually work.

AN APP A DAY
Sania Shah

And if you strictly follow a trusted app’s guided workouts, you can actually be that fit friend who shows off his/her abs on Instagram. So, are you ready to meet your new gym buddy in the form of an app? 3, 2, 1... here we go!

NIKE TRAINING CLUB
The Nike Training Club app access high on all fronts—design, experience, features, and brand integration. Nike has done the app with about 200 options, each with short videos of trainers demonstrating each move position or exercise with deceptive ease and utter perfection. The best part is, the app is completely free.

Short workouts ranging from 3-20 minutes motivate beginners to move into the fitness gym. Meanwhile, workouts attached with the intimidating ‘tag Athlete’ are also offered.

You can identify your workout for the day using specific filters, such as: Muscle Group (eg - Abs & Core), Workout type ( Strength/Endurance/Mobility/Strength/Vigor), and Equipment (from no equipment to full equipment). If you are not sure and need some inspiration, collections like ‘Workouts that Boost Your Mood’, ‘Best of Abs, Arms and Glutes’ or the quarantine favourite ‘Big Workouts for Small Spaces’ help get you started without wasting any time.

From simple tactics for better runs (tips - pre-run stretching and a proper cool-down are recommended) to yoga-inspired routines for individuals who enjoy more mindful movements, Nike seems to have thoughtfully built a one-stop fitness shop that caters to all kinds of people. It also has the option of set plans for 4, 6 or 8 weeks for you to pick from.

The Nike app connects seamlessly with Apple Watch, helping you track your drills, heart rate, calories and stats, without having to pull out your phone.

30 DAY FITNESS CHALLENGE
Once you launch the 30 Day Fitness Challenge, it asks whether you want to lose weight, get toned or build muscle, and rearranges its content accordingly for you. The app categorizes its workouts based on areas of the body, and they all come with multiple levels (Easy, Medium or Hard) based on your experience.

Recording your training progress, daily reminder notifications and social media shareability are just some of the handy features. Entering your height, weight and Body Mass Index into the app will help you shape up and reach your abbreviate.

Quick results require daily dietary discipline, therefore a detailed 30-day meal plan and weekly shopping lists are built into the app. Workouts don’t work unless you are eating right.

YOGA 1 DOWN DOG
No everybody is built for jumping jacks and burpees, some of us need an exercise plan that is more relaxed and flexible, with focus on mental health and meditative breathing while also building body strength and flexibility. The answer is yoga. Yoga 1 Down Dog

The app offers ‘gentle’ yoga for beginner yogis. Hatha yoga with beautiful standing poses, restorative yoga focused on stretching and relaxation without standing, chair yoga for when you are working from home and need a refreshing break without leaving the chair, and the celebrated asana namaste, the ultimate pose that consists of a set of 12 poses repeated for good measure. Ending with a guided 10-minute ‘yoga nidra’ to top off your at-home yoga and tackle all the stress and anxiety you might be dealing with.

Because of the worldwide quarantines, the Yoga Down Dog app is free until 1 May 2020. Until next week, stay home, and nama-stay.
Front.

**Human face of a Himalayan**

In a small riverbank community of Dungang below Mt. Gauri Shankar, Jammu Sherpa runs a small teahouse. The settlement has two families who are still rebuilding their homes after the earthquake five years ago. Jammu has a dozen goats, her primary companions in this wilderness near the Chinese border. The tea house is a rest stop for trekkers headed up to two Rolpa.

Glacial lake, or onwards to Tashi Lap Tse to Khumbu. With the Himalaya warming between 0.5-2.7°C, faster than the global average, these mountains will lose at least one-third of their ice by the end of the century. And that is the best-case scenario, according to the Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment: Climate Change, Sustainability and People put together last year by Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

The increased melting means melt water is accumulating in glacial lakes that absorb and transmit thermal energy to the glacier face, causing a positive-feedback loop and accelerating the thaw. The lakes are growing in size, and are at risk of bursting to flood downstream valleys. Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF) can be caused by avalanches falling into the lakes, or by earthquakes. In the late 1990s, the risk of a GLOF event from Two Rolpa led to panic among people living in the Tama Kosi Valley below. Scientists had been monitoring the lakes which had grown seven times in size since 1997.

Twenty years ago, the Nepal government with international.

**Fatalism and denial among mountain communities living downstream from a dangerous glacial lake**

Rastaraj Bhandari in Dolakha

**Climate, coronavirus and**

How China rebuilds its economy after the pandemic will impact the climate crisis
climate crisis

Too Rolpa global lake at 4,580m has grown seven times in size in the past 40 years due to global warming.

China

China needs to lead by example. It is imperative for the much-anticipated National Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) to be rolled out on time in 2020, enhance its newly established Carbon Market, and green Belt and Road Initiative.

As host of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Kunming in October, China also has the opportunity to expand its recent national ban on wildlife trade and consumption into a worldwide ban.

Although the COVID-19 epidemic itself might not be directly linked to climate change, this ban suggests that China can take on the international connection of human, animal and ecosystem health.

Human activities are currently the priority for the world. Nonetheless, the climate crisis also needs to be urgently addressed, as its consequences will have a greater impact on our ecology, economy and society into the future.

How China pursues the revival of its economy in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic will be closely watched. This is a unique leadership opportunity for China to foster innovative policymaking centered around climate action that will be an example for other countries to follow.

Kasthuri Bhantrain
Nepal’s prisons need to be depopulated

Prabhas Pokharel

Even before the current coronavirus scare, Nepal’s overcrowded prisons were hotbeds for infectious diseases like tuberculosis, typhoid and influenza. But public health experts fear that the ease of spread of COVID-19 through breathing and touch could make Nepal’s jails incubators for the virus.

There have been many studies of crowded living conditions, hygiene and violence in Nepal’s prisons, and a coronavirus outbreak could affect the health of detainees, security staff and through them spread to the general population. ‘Our prisons infrastructure is not properly managed, as a result detainees have to be kept in crowded up places,’ admits Sharmila Kumari Shrestha, Senior Assistant Health Worker at Birla Bazar prison. ‘We have regular awareness programs on washing hands and maintaining physical separation, but implementation is difficult. It is so crowded here that even maintaining 1.5m distance is not possible.’

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has published guidelines for preventing and managing the cases of COVID-19 in prisons and detention centres. According to the latest report of the Department of Prison Management (DPM), there are 24,512 prisoners in Nepal’s jails – 1,528 of them women, 1,181 foreigners and 91 are dependents. There are 70 juvenile correction centres in Nepal with 647 boys and 23 girls.

‘Given that COVID-19 thrives on social contact, having crowded jails with people coming in and out is likely to promote transmission into jails, transmission within jails and “spillover” of infections out of the jails into the community,’ says Columbia University epidemiology professor Baron Marinho on an email interview with Nepal Times this week. Even within jails and detention centres it is important to identify the medically vulnerable people, those with chronic conditions like HIV/AIDS, respiratory illnesses and cancer. Individuals with these co-morbid conditions may be predisposed to poor COVID-19 clinical outcomes.

Studies have shown that reducing the number of inmates would lessen the pressure on prisons. Releasing medically vulnerable, nonviolent offenders and people towards the end of their sentence could free up some space in the prisons, and would help in general mitigation goal of slowing the spread of the virus.

The Office of Attorney General (OAG) worked on the provisions to reduce the number of prisoners and inmates in juvenile detention centers. Depending on the gravity of the crime, the concerned authority and the police would have to decide on an individual basis whether the prisoner can be released on parole. ‘If the police or adjudicating authority decide it is not necessary to keep a person in detention during the course of an investigation, they may release them on parole instead of bail or recognition to appear on the given day,’ says advocate Rabindra Shrestha.

The Supreme Court responded positively to a move by Attorney General Agni Khadka to release 13 elderly prisoners in Nepal’s jails and sent the file to the Home Ministry, among them the Frenchman Jean-Claude Chatelet. The Court also decided to exercise the power of case division in accordance with the Act Relating to Children-2008 so that juvenile detainees can be released on parole to appear when called by the court on the guarantee of their parent/guardian.

It is up to the Home Ministry to make the final decision, but we are sending the list of elderly inmates to them, ’ said the director-general of the Jail Administration Department, Prem Din Raj Randel.

The decision to pardon or suspend the jail sentence by the OAG is a win-win situation, legal experts say. It would reduce the load on prison management which would, in turn, minimise the risk of COVID-19. However, many inmates are in jail not because they have to pay a fine, and some are not able to pay the fine.

"Prisons can be incubators for COVID-19"

Nepal Times spoke to Baron Marinho, professor of epidemiology at the Molson School of Public Health at Columbia University in New York about how the COVID-19 pandemic will affect prisons.

Nepal Times: How serious is the danger of coronavirus or other infectious spreading into the general population?

Baron Marinho: The risk of infections within jails and detention centers is very serious, as a result of overcrowding and lack of necessary protections. If inmates and staff contract COVID-19, they can then spread the disease to their families, neighbors and eventually the broader community. However, there are several risk mitigation strategies that can help reduce the likelihood of infections spreading. First, inmates and staff should be tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible. Second, new inmates should be isolated to reduce the risk of spreading disease. Third, inmates and staff should be provided with masks, hand sanitizer, and other supplies to prevent the spread of disease. Finally, the government should consider releasing prisoners who are elderly or have pre-existing conditions, as they are at higher risk of severe illness.

NTP: What is your view on the probate immune-enhancing property of the BCS vaccine?

Baron Marinho: Research is ongoing and the BCS vaccine is still in development. At this stage it is not clear whether the BCS vaccine will be effective in reducing the risk of COVID-19 infections. Further research and testing are needed to determine the efficacy and safety of the BCS vaccine. However, it is important to continue research and development of potential COVID-19 vaccines to help control the pandemic. As we learn more about the virus and its transmission, we can develop better strategies to prevent and control its spread.

NTP: How did you develop an interest in epidemiology and especially anti-microbial resistance?

Baron Marinho: I have always been interested in infectious diseases, especially those that spread easily in crowded environments such as prisons and detention centers. My interest in epidemiology stems from the belief that the spread of diseases in these settings can have significant public health implications. I also have a strong interest in antimicrobial resistance, as it is a major public health concern that affects the effectiveness of antibiotics and other treatments.

NTP: In your opinion, how important is it to have adequate funds for the purchase of vaccines and related materials?

Baron Marinho: Adequate funding is critical for ensuring that the necessary vaccines and related materials are available to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. Access to vaccines is particularly important in low-resource settings, where limited funding can significantly impact public health outcomes. Adequate funding can help ensure that vaccines are available to those who need them most, especially in crowded environments like prisons and detention centers.