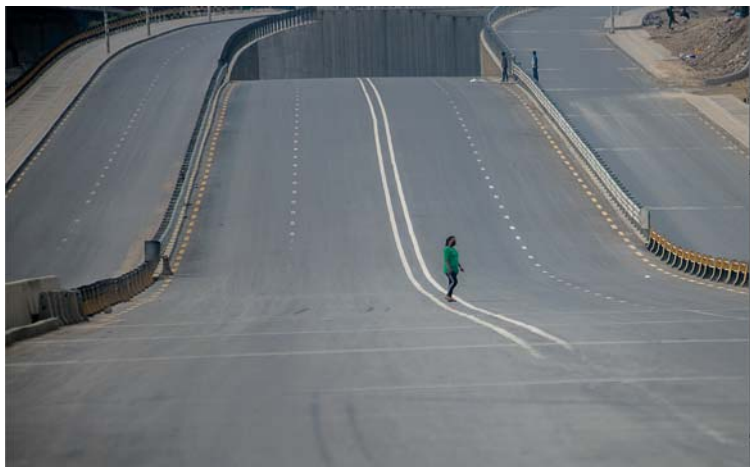


Reduce harm

The low coronavirus case load in Nepal in March and April was largely due to the country being relatively isolated. The lockdown and ban on flights did help slow the spread of the virus.

But as returning Nepali workers were stopped at the border, over-crowded makeshift quarantine centres became incubators for the disease. As the floodgates are finally opened, many desperate and hungry people are rushing home without proper testing, some taking the infection with them.

Thousands of workers who trudged across India for days, and were blocked at the Nepal border for weeks have now been stopped by Karnali Province. Camped by the road on the outskirts of Surkhet are pregnant mothers, children and families without food and water.



MANISH PAUDE

Inevitably, Nepal is no longer just dealing with imported cases, but with community spreading. And what started out as a health crisis has turned into an economic disaster and a humanitarian emergency. Returnees stopped at the Indian border till two weeks ago, are now being stopped at the provincial boundaries.

The lockdown is now causing human suffering and hardship on a far greater scale than the disease it was supposed to stop. It exposes the government's complacency and squandering of the lead time provided by the lockdown to prepare for the exodus.

The Finance Minister's budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year on Friday will reflect the new priorities for Nepal -- spreading the social safety net so that the jobless are taken care of, money is allocated for detection, quarantine, isolation, treatment of the population during what is sure to be a prolonged pandemic, on agriculture, and a stimulus package to kickstart businesses.

However, as shown by the government's Policies and Programs formally read to Parliament by President Bidya Devi Bhandari on 15 May and the Appropriations Bill, the government has done little more than cut and paste from previous budgets. These are extraordinary times, and it needs extraordinary determination to think outside the box.

The country saw the biggest single day

increase in coronavirus on Thursday with 152 cases, bringing the total to 1042. This was expected, and some projections show that total cases will climb to 5,000 in the coming weeks as testing picks up. The high-level Coronavirus Control and Management Committee is mulling a relaxation of restrictions, but in all likelihood the government will take the easy way out and extend the sweeping lockdown.

The only positive side effect of the lockdown so far has been that monitoring stations across Kathmandu Valley have reported much lower levels of harmful air pollutants in the past two months. NASA remote sensing data shows a dramatic decline in toxic nitrous oxides over northern India, primarily due to the drop in vehicular traffic.

The reduction in crossborder pollution brought down NOx over Nepal by 20% during the lockdown, and the concentration of the toxic gases dropped by 50% in Kathmandu Valley. In the first weeks of the lockdown, the sale of petrol and diesel was down to 5% of normal levels in Kathmandu.

Hospitals saw a dramatic decline in people suffering from COPD and asthma.

Alas, this positive outcome did not happen because of a planned transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy, but was forced on us by a COVID-19 lockdown. It is also temporary, and there is every indication that the government thinks a return to normal means

going back to the old way of doing things.

Nepal spent Rs215 billion last year on importing petroleum products, far greater than what is earned from all of the country's exports put together. In a pre-budget statement, the Climate Action Network South Asia said Nepal needs to reduce petroleum import and have a pro-active policy to encourage the use of its surplus hydro-electricity to switch to battery-operated vehicles. It recommends setting up a Renewable Energy Fund to create electric-powered public transport systems.

Reducing the import of petroleum products by only 10% will result in a national saving worth Rs21 billion annually, which can then be invested to build infrastructure for cleaner options. But in the short term as we come out of lockdown, Kathmandu can make a start on pedestrianising core city areas, promoting bicycle lanes, and encouraging public transport with precautions keeping physical distance and wearing masks.

This will revive the economy while we wait for agriculture and tourism to pick up, prevent the virus from spreading, and keep people healthy by reducing air pollution.

What started out as a health crisis is turning into an economic disaster and a humanitarian emergency

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

10 years ago this week, *Nepali Times* in the issue #504 published 'Urban Crush' written by correspondents Dewan Rai and Suwayu Dev Pant which focused on the haphazard real estate development threatening Kathmandu with an environmental disaster. This rapid development a decade ago went unchecked, and has encroached on the Valley's remaining open spaces. Even then, residents were complaining of the danger of landslides and ground water depletion. Excerpt:

Rampant real estate development, or 'plotting', has left giant craters at the base of Shivapuri National Park, threatening the local ecology and the valley's river network.

The plotting is taking place very close to the nature reserve, which raises the risk of landslides. "We're very much aware of the problem, but there's little that we can do as the plotting is occurring outside the park boundaries, so is not within our jurisdiction," says Megh Bahadur Pandey of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation.

The story is the same at other locations on the periphery of the Valley floor.



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Publisher and Chief Editor: **Kunda Dixit**
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Published by **Himalmedia Pvt Ltd** | Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu
editors@nepalitimes.com | www.nepalitimes.com | www.himalmedia.com | Tel: 01-5005601-08 Fax: +977-1-5005518
Marketing: **Arjun Karki**, **Surendra Sharma** rachanas@himalmedia.com
Subscriptions: **Santosh Aryal** santosha@himalmedia.com
Printed at Jagadamba Press | Production Plant: 01-5250017-18
City Office: 01-5529210-11 | www.jagadambapress.com | sales@jppl.com.np



Nepali Times.com

CORONAVIRUS TREK

What a wonderful experience, rich in life and insight ('Journey to the mountain of the spirit', Claire Burkert and Thomas Kelly, page 8-9). Stay well.

Susan Bailey

■ Thanks for sharing this; I could almost imagine being there.

Robert M Mason

■ The authors deftly balance the new - blue metal rooftops and a new highway - against the mental strength the natives possess, their self-knowledge grounded in a long, close and creative relationship with the environment. What a tightly interwoven description of the mountain people's physical and spiritual realities. Loved it.

Tania G Evans

KALAPANI

As rightly pointed out, this was an utterly devastating failure of the intelligence capacity ('Nepal needs intelligent intelligence', Dipak Gurung, nepalitimes.com). The government is more attentive to other lucrative intelligence rather than the national defence.

Govind Thapa

■ Lets not spread hate towards the friendly countries and develop the conversation based on diplomatic talks ('Politics and history of Nepal's Kalapani claim', Prabhakar Sharma, nepalitimes.com).

Roshan Sharma

CHILD MARRIAGE

This is a worrying trend ('Child marriage up during Nepal lockdown', Namrata Sharma, nepalitimes.com). Girls are particularly vulnerable. It illustrates the importance of empowering girls to make good informed decisions

Joy Stephens

■ Tragic social outcomes of the COVID-19 in Nepal and probably everywhere poverty and patriarchy create oppressive conditions for women. Eloping is the new big issue as teens avoid arranged marriage.

Jill Allison

COVID-19

The reality of other health issues are being far overshadowed by the media hype of the coronavirus ('3 Nepali mothers still die daily at childbirth', Marty Logan, nepalitimes.com). If only the government had concentrated their efforts at the border, instead of beating people up in the streets.

Steve L Roberts

■ A Catch 22 situation. ('3rd month of lockdown', Sonia Awale, #1011)! The economic crisis is likely to take more lives than the COVID-19.

Anju Sharma

■ Either we were ineffective in locking the country up, (which I think we did just as good if not better than many other nations), or lockdown is not a solution to the problem.

Jung Bahadur Thapa

■ Many people would not have been infected, if they had been brought in legally, if they did not have to sneak through border ('The Kathmandu airlift', Editorial, #1011). The world is bringing its citizens back in a systematic way, why did Nepal not do so?

Rita Bhandary

■ The bigger question is how they are going to manage those returning from abroad in terms of accommodation, food, quarantine facilities and tests.

Rojina Rjb Shrestha

■ Read the heroic story of Jenny Lamichhane, a New York-based Nepali doctor serving on the frontlines of the fight against the COVID-19 ('Overseas Nepalis on the COVID-19 frontlines', Upasana Khadka, #1010). Our US-Nepal people-to-people connections continue to inspire me!

Randy Berry

■ Like so many corona warriors around the world, our very own Jenny Lamichhane is doing her bit. She has once again shown that love for humanity knows no boundaries.

Basant Chaudhary

■ Sincere appreciation to all those foreigners stranded yet helping out the locals ('Travellers stuck in Nepal help locals in need', Sonia Awale, #1011).

Prabakaran Narayanan

WHAT'S TRENDING



Nepal's airlines can take off again

by *Birendra B Basnet*

Aviation will revive-post lockdown because of pent-up demand from domestic travellers. We may then be able to attract tourists from India and China as flight restrictions are relaxed. Find out more in this op-ed by the CEO of Buddha Air and join the discussion online.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Nepal town is model for COVID-19 preparedness

by *Dibesh Karmacharya*

Thimi sets a high standard for community-based preparedness to deal with the coronavirus crisis. The town of 100,000 is using GIS mapping to carry out community-based COVID-19 surveillance with molecular testing – all because it has a visionary mayor. Find out more: nepalitimes.com

Most popular on Twitter

3rd month of lockdown

by *Sonia Awale*

From dramatic increase in maternal mortality and to kidney patients dying due to lack of dialysis, Nepal now has to balance the risk of coronavirus with many more non-COVID deaths due to the lockdown. Join the discussion online.

Most commented

NASA images track changes in Nepal

Anthropologists and data scientists have combined fieldwork with NASA satellite imagery of Nepal to track community changes and map risks caused by natural disasters, political upheavals, and migration in the region. This story was read by tens of thousands around the world on www.nepalitimes.com

Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
India's unilateral actions since November have only confirmed the worst fears among #Nepalis about #India. It is time to reduce the tension & work towards diplomatic dialogue with mutual respect. Prabhakar Sharma writes on Nepal-India #Kalapani claim.

Tikka @tikajitgurung
Integrity, mutual respect & genuine commitment toward bilateral diplomatic talks were never there from India; just a driven misguided ideology of delusional power enshrined with bullying diplomacy that has utter disregard for Nepal's sovereignty & territorial integrity.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Government prepares to import more untested RDT test kits, and directs hospitals to use them despite evidence that it gives inaccurate results. The directive comes even as real-time PCR testing machines and RNA extractors are not being fully used.

Agya Mahat @AgyaMahat
Hon @MinendraRijal @thapagk @Shekharmc why isn't the opposition doing its job in the parliament? Your silence implies that you support the government on this matter

Om Prakash Bhatta @mepakashom
Political greed in the time of pandemic! Disgraceful!

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
#Kathmandu was traditionally designed for #pedestrians. With increased motorisation, the space previously occupied by people have been taken over by cars & motorcycles. @BhushanTuladhar writes on what the future of mobility should be like in #Nepal.

Amod Pyakuryal @AmPyakuryal
Nice write up. I think along with reclaiming/restructuring roads to better accommodate pedestrians, police have to be trained better to enforce traffic rules and drivers' education should be part of school curriculum that students MUST pass to be eligible to get a license.



MANISH PAUDEL

Kathmandu's road ahead post-COVID-19

What the future of mobility should be like in Nepal after the end of mobility restrictions

Bhushan Tuladhar

Seven rows of private cars squeezed to fit in a four-lane road in Kathmandu as the city partially opened its lockdown two weeks ago. Social media exploded in horror at this shocking scene (*pictured*).

Unfortunately, once the lockdown starts being lifted, this may be the future of mobility in our cities. Unless we dare to think and act differently.

Boots, bikes and buses are the key to make a city clean, efficient and accessible for all residents. But it is likely that people will be inclined towards choosing the perceived safety of their private cars or motorcycles instead. The government is said to be considering opening up the streets for only private cars for fear that buses will increase the risk of contagion.

Many cities around the world have, however, taken a different approach to mobility – one that ensures that people can practice physical distancing while walking and cycling. Mayor Sadiq Khan says: “London’s road to recovery cannot be clogged with cars.” The UK government is investing £2 billion to promoting walking and cycling.

New Zealand became the first country to fund municipalities to invest in pop-up bike lanes and widen sidewalks, also known as ‘tactical urbanism’ to reclaim the space given to cars. In France, the government will pay cyclists up to €50 for repairs so bicycles will be ready for post-lockdown rides. Paris has added 650km of bicycle lanes. Peru plans to expand Lima’s bicycle lane network from 145km to 301km in 100 days.

Some 200 cities around the world are taking space away from cars and giving them to people by investing in temporary or permanent walkways and cycle lanes.

Kathmandu was traditionally designed for pedestrians. With increased motorisation, the space previously occupied by people have been taken over by cars and



motorcycles. Courtyards in the core city areas turned into parking lots, streets were widened to reduce congestion but without sufficient space for walking or cycling.

The four-lane Tripureswor-Teku road was converted to six-lanes by encroaching on the footpath. When Ring Road was widened

all eight new lanes were given to cars, although the original agreement mentioned bicycle lanes on both sides.

This car-centric development has resulted into an increase in vehicular traffic as well as unsafe streets, mainly for pedestrians and cyclists. Although 40% of the trips in Kathmandu are on foot, pedestrian safety is often ignored. Almost half of the traffic fatalities in Kathmandu are pedestrians.

The transport system in Kathmandu and other cities in Nepal need to be people-centric rather than car-centric. The COVID-19 lockdown has just made this need even more urgent.

Kathmandu’s first Masterplan – Physical Development Plan Kathmandu Valley, 1969 mentions: ‘Vehicle traffic in the city cores of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhadgaon, must be prohibited.’ That was 50 years ago, and no one listened then, and no one bothers now.

In the past few years Kathmandu and Lalitpur municipalities have taken some initiatives to promote walking and cycling. But the approach has been piecemeal, the pace slow, and response from the public lukewarm. In fact, when the City Planning Commission of Kathmandu discussed pedestrianising core areas many local businesses opposed the idea. Experience from around the world, including MG Road in Gangtok to Times Square in New York, show that shops benefit when streets are given to people.

The COVID-19 lockdown now provides an opportunity for Kathmandu and Lalitpur to set aside increased space for walking or cycling. Restricting vehicles in areas like New Road and Thamel will allow physical distancing, enhance local businesses and improve air quality.

Municipalities will need to immediately engage with local stakeholders and roll out plans before the cars take over the streets again. This pandemic also provides an opportunity

for long overdue restructuring of public transport – making it more reliable, safe and attractive to all users through route restructuring, bus fleet improvement, operational efficiency and digitisation of information and fare collection.

While private bus operators are needed, the role of government should also be clearly defined. It needs to also invest in the public transport system and work closely with the private operators to make it efficient and sustainable. All private

COVID-19

bus operators are facing heavy losses and possibly bankruptcy, so the government needs to not just rescue them but also transform their functions.

This may be the best time to go green as well. The National Electricity Authority says there is excess electricity in the national grid, and hydropower may have to be ‘spilled’, particularly at night. What better way to utilise this energy than store it in batteries for use in public transport instead of dirty diesel.

At a time when economy is suffering due to the pandemic, cutting down on oil imports can be a big relief. While the coronavirus may increase private car use and stigmatise public transport, it also presents an opportunity to transform our transportation sector. This is our chance to make the future of mobility people-centric rather than car-centric. Are we ready to make the move? 🇳🇵



Bhushan Tuladhar is an environmentalist and Executive Director of Sajha Yatayat. This is the first of a two-part series, the second part next week will deal with bicycle lanes.

Nepal is too big for ad hocism

This reality show is as real as it gets, and we better get new systems in place

A country of 30 million is not small. A country that cannot spend 70% of its development budget is not cash poor.

Nepal is big enough to need systems in place and use them to manage the country. It cannot muddle through on ad hocism, and especially during a crisis like the one we are going through now.



½ FULL
Anil Chitrakar

As we begin to emerge hopefully soon from the impact of the lockdown, we must shed the practices and habits that have characterised governance in Nepal: the attitudes of *ke garne*, *afno manche*, *bholi*, *chali halchha*.

Meritocracy will have to replace nepotism, goal-orientation has to replace fatalism, and we have to do yesterday what could have been done tomorrow if anything is going to change for the better in Nepal. If Nepal does not get remittances from those employed abroad in the post-COVID-19 era, how will we pay for the country's fossil fuel imports? We need to think systems.

No matter who comes to power, there is an underlying belief that being in power means the freedom to make ad hoc decisions. The god kings and oligarch rulers made decisions on a whim, and those bad habits seem to have been inherited by our federal, republican democratic strongmen.

Once in power, they do not like to put in systems because that will mean decisions have to be consultative, accountable and transparent. The problem with making ad hoc decisions is that they may offer short term benefits, but you do get into trouble at some point or other in future. How many times can you use the excuse that you did not know what was going on?

In a country with seven provincial and 753 locally elected governments, systems have to be in place if people are to feel the impact of Nepal's political evolution over the last seven decades – after all what were those changes for if not to improve governance, service delivery and spur development?

The COVID-19 crisis is a watershed moment. It offers



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

Nepal a unique chance to digitise government services that will do away with ad hocism and corruption that comes from human to human contact. You cannot grease a palm if it is virtual, and wrongdoers leave digital footprints.

Making transactions cashless and physical distancing could be the best ways to fight corruption in Nepal. If we can introduce contact tracing and ensure it is meticulously enforced, we could make fighting crime and corruption very useful by-products of this pandemic.

The global pandemic has offered Nepal and the whole world a chance to re-imagine and re-build the health sector. The lockdown was meant to be a strategy to buy time for the government, health professionals and related businesses to ramp up capacity and ability to respond. These include everything from the manufacture and distribution of masks and PPE to developing tests and vaccines.

In Nepal, the pandemic has felt more like a paid holiday for many. There was no attempt by the government, development partners or professionals to convince and

bring the sectors together to use this opportunity for the future. Health for all, insurance, research and development, supply chain management, trainings, up gradation of hospitals and health facilities, formalising pharmacies ... so much could have been done. But it is still not too late.

We have a whole generation of people who have grown up watching Hollywood movies where Superman and Wonder Woman track down the bad guys making lethal viruses, killing them and destroying their labs in the nick of time. What we have not seen is a movie which picks up after the virus has been contained, and society has to chart a new path of revival, learning from the mistakes of the past.

Watching a movie passively knowing that there will be a happy ending is one thing, but today we are individually all players in the unfolding plot and 'I' could very well be the next victim, or hero. This reality show is as real as it gets. Lives and livelihoods are being lost, and the virus is quick to pounce when it detects weak leadership, denial, or a lack of systems.

We in Nepal must use this

opportunity to address inequality and discrimination. It is a chance to clean up Mt Everest, dredge Phewa Lake, prevent sewage from flowing into the Bagmati, repair trails and trail bridges, upgrade the seven major monument zones in the Kathmandu Valley, Janakpur and Lumbini.

Cities across Nepal need to create dedicated sidewalks for pedestrians and bicycle lanes, make sure that Nepal's transport system moves to clean hydroelectricity. Nepal has no oil and we need to plan for energy security by reminding ourselves how many times India has cut off our petroleum supply in recent history.

Once again, the government may not take the lead here because it does not have the systems in place. We have to collectively step up as a people. Time calls on us to move away from sound bites and photo ops. After all, the first fatality in Nepal attributed to COVID-19 required young volunteers from Bhaktapur to quietly step up and enable the cremation. 🇳🇵

Anil Chitrakar is President of Siddharthinc.

prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

e-Sewa remittance

e-Sewa in collaboration with the Malaysian company Valyou has launched a wallet-to-wallet remittance service between migrant workers in Malaysia and their families back home in Nepal. Workers in Malaysia



can now transfer money from their Valyou wallet to the e-Sewa wallet, or to any Nepali bank account. The digital wallet company had previously launched a similar remittance service between users in Japan and Nepal.

NICASIA

NIC Asia Bank has signed an MOU with Reecharger to purchase COVID-19 safety tools at a 10% discount. Under the agreement, NIC Asia customers buying



safety tools through QR codes, debit cards, and credit cards can get the discount off the purchase price. Per its corporate social responsibility, Reecharger has been selling N-95 masks for reduced costs and delivering them free of cost during the pandemic.

Hong-Kong Nepal remittance

Hong Kong's KME remittance and City Express Money transfer have partnered to provide remittance service between Nepalis in Hong Kong and their families back home. Nepalis who are in Hong Kong can send their money via KME remittance account to their relatives' City Express account. Additionally, customers can deposit their money in any bank in Nepal and load the funds onto their digital wallets.

NIBL Ace Capital

In light of falling global economic indicators and fears of a deteriorating world economy



due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NIBL Ace Capital Limited has launched two new advisory products for clients under their Corporate Advisory Service: Business Assessment and Impact Analysis and Startup set up and Capital Funding.

CREASION and Coca-Cola

CREASION and The Coca-Cola Foundation announced a joint Waste Worker Emergency Relief Project (WWERP), aiming to create awareness as well as provide safety gears and relief materials to 3200 waste management workers and their families to be safe against COVID-19. The project is part of the Coca-Cola Foundation's initial pledge of Rs80 million towards the fight against the coronavirus. The relief effort will extend to municipalities across Kathmandu, Kirtipur, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Chitwan, Saptari and Siraha.

prabhu BANK

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KAREN SETO

High resolution satellite imagery of the Himalaya show details as small as livestock grazing in a field. But what they cannot tell you is how communities on the ground are changing because of natural disasters, political upheavals, or migration.

Which is why NASA is supporting a group of anthropologists and geographers to use its images from space of Dolakha in Nepal and other areas of the Himalaya to track these changes so that local governments can plan land use and new infrastructure.

Researchers will use remote sensing data of the region 80km northeast of Kathmandu that was hit by two big earthquakes in 2015 to look into not just the changes in topography and vegetation, but also the impact on the movement of people and how livelihoods have changed with time.

“Satellite images do not show how trade routes change, or the demographic impact of political instability, so what we are trying to do is combine top-down big data with bottom-up ethnographic research for a more nuanced understanding of the changes taking

place on the ground,” explain Mark Turin and Sara Shneiderman, both anthropologists at the University of British Columbia (UBC).

Turin and Shneiderman were both involved in the ethnographic study of the Thami people in Dolakha, and say the project will help uncover the “social history” of the district they know so well using remote sensing data over time. The Tama Kosi valley is at high risk due to the danger from the Tso Rolpa glacial lake in the Rolwaling.

The NASA project will be a collaboration between UBC and Yale Himalaya Initiative and will also explore the transformation of Namche Bazar in Nepal, Leh in India and Trongsa in Bhutan – all areas exposed to impacts of climate change, natural disasters, as well as tourism and infrastructure development.

The study will also help bridge the knowledge gap between well-studied changes in the urbanisation patterns of big cities in the Himalayan region and the less-known effects on land use in smaller towns.

Nepal is one of the most-densely populated mountain areas of the world, and is vulnerable to the impact of climate change, earthquakes,

NASA images track changes in Nepal

Anthropologists and data scientists combine fieldwork with satellite imagery to map risk

HAND IN HAND: Researchers work with community groups to analyse high resolution NASA satellite images to plot infrastructure and disaster risk in Dolakha.

ground research, the group found that human settlements in the Himalaya have seen many cycles of infrastructure development due to factors like disasters, political instability or economic policy.

Seto says although we know more about the big cities, there is not enough data on which towns in Nepal are growing and how fast, and where the vulnerable groups in society are living, especially after the 2015 earthquake.

The population of Himalayan towns and cities has doubled in the past 40 years, and out-migration from rural areas has left farms fallow, and reduced pressure on forests. This demographic shift has had measurable ecological implications with expansion of urban centres along highways, new roads have caused rockslides, adding to the risk.

With the lockdown into its third month in Nepal, there is already significant impact of the return of young migrant workers back to their villages and the drop in tourism on the semi-urban communities in the Himalayan hinterland.

Researchers will be using NASA’s Landsat images at 2.5m resolution as well as recently de-classified military spy satellite images from the 1980s. On the ground, economists and sociologists will collect data on health, education, migration and the impact of political changes on the communities.

Says Seto: “The findings will help local governments understand the changes taking place so they can plan safer urban development less vulnerable to earthquakes, landslides, fires. After all, disasters in the Himalaya are not a question of if, but when.” 🇳🇵

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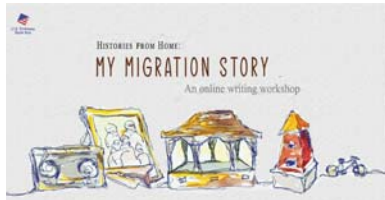
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VIRTUAL EVENTS



Writing workshop

'Histories from Home: My migration story' is an online writing workshop designed to share and exchange stories of migration and explore how it has shaped life experiences. Participants will be selected based on writing samples. Details on how and by when to send in samples are on the Quixote's Cove Facebook page.

1 June onwards

Global film festival

20 film festivals have joined together to stream movies free on YouTube as the 'We Are One: A Global Film Festival'. Featuring content curated by the Berlin, Cannes, Venice, Sundance, Toronto and Tribeca film festivals, among others.

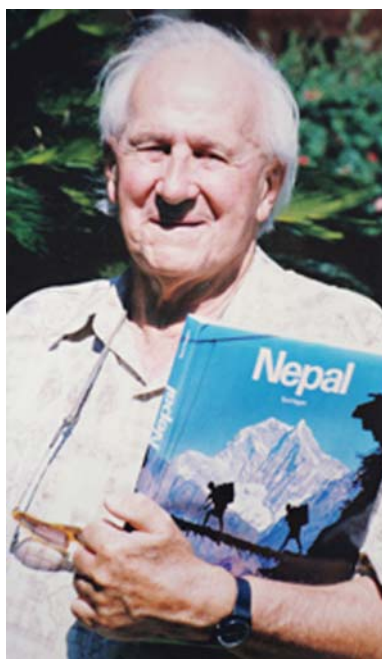
29 May onwards

Graphic design webinar

Learn graphic design from a trainer who has more than a decade of experience in creative designing. For more details, go to <https://tinyurl.com/y8re6gn2>

29 May

Space Apps Challenge
NASA, the European Space Agency and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency invite coders, entrepreneurs, scientists, designers, storytellers, builders, artists, and technologists to participate in a virtual COVID-19-related hackathon. For details, go to Nepal Innovative Ghar's Facebook page.
30-31 May



Tony Hagen Grant

Entries for the Tony Hagen Foundation Film Grants, which awards Rs150,000 support to three young Nepali documentary filmmakers for KIMFF, are now open to accept concept papers. Visit the KIMFF website for details.
Deadline: 10 July

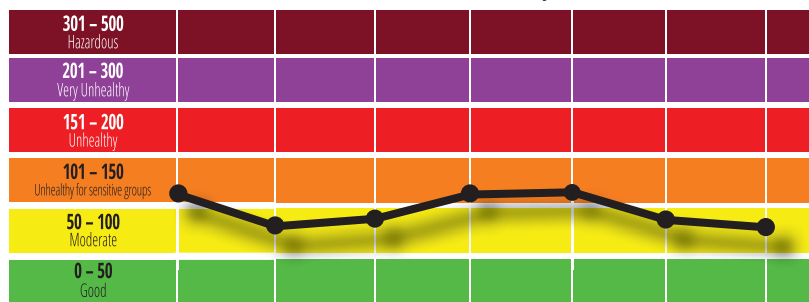


Even though it has been a much wetter April and May than usual, things are falling into a predictable pre-monsoon pattern with bright mornings, afternoon buildup into thunderstorms and heavy localised rain caused by updrafts from the searing heat of the plains. The temperature will drop from last week's high of 30 degrees to the mid-20s this weekend. The monsoon is now lapping at the Kerala coast, but is still a month away from Nepal.



AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 22 - 28 May



Compared to the previous week, the daily average for Air Quality Index (AQI) in Kathmandu looked better as the pre-monsoon rains continued. In fact, just after particularly sharp showers on Tuesday and Wednesday, the live hour-by-hour AQI on www.nepalimes.com sometimes even dipped to the Green 'Good' Band. However, because of open garbage burning and crossborder particulates transported by prevailing winds, it soon climbed to the Yellow 'Unhealthy' Band when measured at Phora Durbar monitoring station. With more thunderstorms predicted into the weekend, the AQI will get progressively better.

<https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>

ECOLOGIC WITH MISS MOTI

KRIPA JOSHI



Trees are crucial for the health and wellbeing of the whole planet. By absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen, trees help to combat the global warming brought about by our modern lifestyles. Trees provide us with food, fuel and medicine and they improve our mental health. They protect against landslides and soil erosion, they regulate temperatures and water cycles and they also provide biodiverse habitats for wildlife. We need to plant trees and protect them from threats of deforestation, climate change and forest fires so that Earth remains a liveable planet for all forms of life.

ONLINE ARCHIVES



Art Exhibition

Tsherin Sherpa's Metamorphosis, Herron School of Art+Design's first exhibition of focusing on contemporary international art and artists, borrows imagery from classical Tibetan Buddhist iconography to investigate the dichotomy found where sacred and secular traditions and world cultures collide.



Nepal Picture Library

Look at archived photographs from throughout Nepal's history and learn the stories behind the photographs.

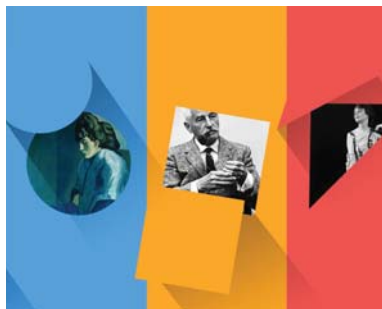
American Literature Library

The American Literature Library has a collection of 160 of the greatest classic short stories, and also thousands of classic novels free for readers to enjoy.



Crash Course

A channel started by authors/educators John Green and Hank Green, of Vlogbrothers fame, Crash Course is a one stop destination for educational material. Watch tons of awesome courses in one channel, from organic chemistry to literature to mythology.



Google Arts & Culture

Google Arts & Culture has teamed up with over 2,500 museums and galleries around the world to bring everyone virtual tours and online exhibits of some of the most famous museums around the world.

QUARANTINE DINING



Detox Cafe

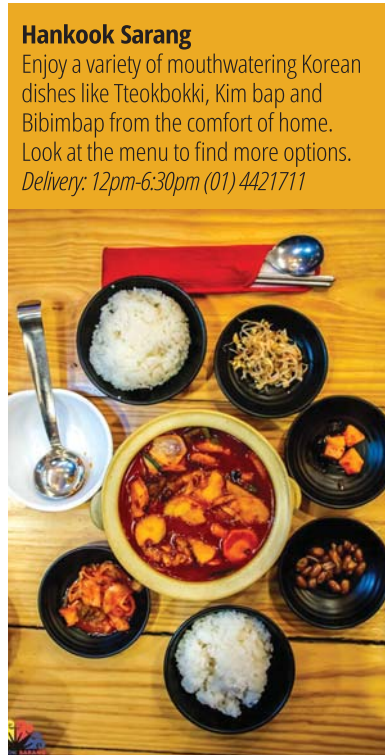
If kickstarting the health-regime sounds appealing, order Detox Cafe's Glazed chicken salad, Buckwheat brownies and banana bread. Check out the cafe's menu on Foodmandu for more option.

Delivery: 12pm-6:30pm

Lhakpa's Chulo

The variety of cuisines at Lhakpa's Chulo' has much to offer, from Newa khaja to Schnitzel to Risotto and Thai prawn curry. Take a look at the menu on Facebook.

Delivery: 12pm-6:15pm (01) 5542986 (01) 5524733



Hankook Sarang

Enjoy a variety of mouthwatering Korean dishes like Tteokbokki, Kim bap and Bibimbap from the comfort of home. Look at the menu to find more options.
Delivery: 12pm-6:30pm (01) 4421711



Pangra Express

Experience the best of street and fast food from Pangra Express. Get the Classic Chicken Momo, Hero Sausage and Shaphale Chicken, or go for the Firehouse Burger. Foodmandu and Bhoj Deals will deliver.
Delivery: 12pm-6:15pm



Baker's Den

Is a loved one's birthday coming up, or need a just-because cake? Order from Baker's Den. Or get freshly baked doughnut, muffins, and bread. Place orders at www.bakersdennepal.com.
(01) 4416560 (01) 4411886

OUR PICK



Produced by ESPN and Netflix, *The Last Dance* is a sports documentary miniseries, which revolves around basketball player—Michael Jordan and his last stint with the Chicago Bulls in the year 1997. The critically acclaimed 2020 miniseries also features exclusive interviews of several NBA personalities including Scottie Pippen, Dennis Rodman, and Phil Jackson. The 10 episodes-long American miniseries is available on Netflix.

बालबालिका माथि हुने हिंसा, दुर्यवहार, शोषण भएको, जोखिमपूर्ण अवस्थामा रहेको वा बालअधिकारको उल्लंघन भएको छ भने बाल हेल्पलाइनको पैसा नलाग्ने

फोन: नं. १०९८ मा खबर गरौं ।



नेपाल सरकार

सञ्चार तथा सूचना प्रविधि मन्त्रालय

सूचना तथा प्रसारण विभाग



STANDING TALL: View is taken from the South Summit (8,750 m) of Mt Everest in spring 2019, looking towards the main summit. Picture below also taken in spring 2019.

DAMIEN FRANCOIS

Mt Everest deserted on anniversary of 1st climb

The lone expedition on the world’s highest mountain this year summited on 28 May

David Durkan

Any other year, the month of May would see big crowds on Mt Everest as climbers waited a weather window to climb the world’s highest mountain. But this year, the COVID-19 lockdown means the mountain is deserted.

The lone Chinese survey expedition from the north side put climbers on the summit on 28 May, after being delayed due to Cyclone Amphan. It will remeasure the mountains’s exact height.

This week is the 67th anniversary of the first ascent of Mt Everest on 29 May 1953 by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay of a British expedition led by John Hunt. Many are saying the mountain is getting a much needed rest this year from the impact of commercial expeditions and climate change.

The southern flanks of what was known as Peak XV when

it was discovered to be the world’s highest point, lie in Nepal’s Khumbu region, while her northern and eastern slopes sweep down to the Tibetan plateau.

Everest is a western imperialistic and masculine label, named after the Surveyor General of India George Everest. In Tibet she is referred to as Chomolungma, The Mother Goddess of the Earth, the Snows, the Sky, the Winds.

Tenzing Norgay’s mother called her ‘The Great Hen’ (protecting her chicks below her wings). Nepal’s eminent historian, the late Baburam Acharya, penned the Nepali name Sagarmatha, meaning The Brow of the Earth touching heaven.

The peak itself is a magnificent pyramid of metamorphosed limestone and sedimentary rock at the top, covered by snow and ice. Her foundations were laid deep below a primal-sea. Giant plates of rock moved below the waves at the



KARMA TENZING

speed human fingernails grow until they rose 65 million years ago to form the Subcontinent, and the Himalaya.

Up to 1810 the world’s highest peaks were thought to be in the Andes. That year W S Webb proved everyone wrong, having calculated summits in the Himalaya to be in excess of 7,900m. By now the British had initiated the mapping of India, and in 1847 of Nepal.

Colonial British was paranoid that the Czar of Russia was setting his eyes on the jewel in its crown, India. This resulted in the shameful British invasion of Tibet, the reason for which was similar to the American invasion of Iraq because it supposedly had weapons of mass destruction. The British, too, only found a few old Russian hunting rifles in Tibet.

Captain C G Rawling of the Younghusband expedition viewed the North Ridge of Everest from 100km away, and felt it might provide a feasible route to the summit. Plans were made, but World War I stopped play. In 1921 the Tibetans granted permission for the British to climb the mountain. They attempted numerous times, until Tibet closed its borders, a decision based on a horoscope reading warning the Dalai Lama of tourists seeking gold in the Home of the Gods.

Luckily for mountaineers,

in 1949/50 Nepal removed its restrictions, and the British quickly fielded two reconnaissance expeditions. However, it was the Swiss who made the first serious attempt in 1952. Their Sherpa team of 12 was led by Tenzing who had added Norgay to his name. They ascended the Khumbu Ice Fall, entered the elusive Western Cwm, climbed the Lhotse Glacier and traversed to the South Col just under 8400m.

Raymond Lambert and Tenzing spent a hard night (melting ice over a candle) and next day were only able to gain a further 250m before descending. The Swiss returned later that year, but again were sadly unsuccessful.

Both the North and the South Poles had been reached, the French had climbed Annapurna, and the Swiss had nearly succeeded on Everest. The race had become political and nationalistic, and the British were desperate, considering Everest ‘their mountain’.

12 February 1953, Colonel Hunt and his party set sail from Britain for India, from where they flew to Nepal. They recruited 350 porters to carry their equipment to Tengboche Monastery (3,950m). Here they spent 2 weeks acclimatising and preparing – then to establish a string of camps up the route the Swiss had opened the year before.

They crawled out of the tent, connected up the oxygen apparatus and set off in the early morning light. Hillary’s feet ice-cold, Tenzing led, they then changed places. The snow suddenly gave way without warning, very unnerving. They reached the South Summit at 09.00. Before them lay the virgin ridge that led to the summit, a daunting sight: huge overhanging masses of snow and ice, with giant drops on each side.

They had four and a half hours of oxygen left, with deep breaths they stepped into the void. Here one slip could see them spinning 3000m into space. Hillary noted, *‘I jammed my way into this crack, then kicking backwards with my crampons, I sank their spikes deep into the frozen snow and levered myself off the ground. ...with a fervent prayer that the cornice would remain attached to the rock.’*

It held. They passed the now disappeared Hillary Step, then plodded up the less steep ridge to reach the summit at 11.30. Tenzing recalls, *‘...my mountain did not seem to me to be a lifeless thing of rock and ice, but warm, friendly and living.’*

The British Mount Everest Expedition was a success, with Hillary and Tenzing reaching the summit on 29 May, 1953. 🇨🇳

“The Swiss understood us better”

Mountaineer David Durkan interviewed Tenzing Norgay in Norway in 1985, a year before he died. Many have asked who set foot on the summit of Everest first, Tenzing or Edmund Hillary. I feel this to be a mundane question as an expedition is a joint effort. One question raised over the years, but to the best of my knowledge never asked, ‘had they fallen out later?’

David Durkan: Many say you and Hillary fell out after Everest?
Tenzing (smiling gently): I heard this too. That people think because you climb one mountain

together that you become friends is strange to my way of thinking. Friendship builds up over time, with deeper values than one climb, even if it is Everest.

The British and Germans never treated us Sherpas very well. They were from the upper class, with military backgrounds, colonialists. They treated us as peons. In Kathmandu the members lived with British Embassy staff, we were put in a hut or a barn. We were given poor equipment, poor food, and low wages. Hillary was different, he

was a farmer, less complex, but we were never friends. The Swiss were professional mountain guides, born and bred in the mountains, like us. They understood us better, they respected us, paying fair wages, and we were given the same equipment as they had. If I had to name one western mountaineering friend, it was Raymond Lambert.

Extract from *Penguins on Everest* by David Durkan. Available in Amazon print or ebook version, or book shops in Kathmandu.



Tenzing Norgay and David Durkan in 1985.

C HELGE BARDETH



Journey to the mountain

Text by Claire Burkert
Photographs by Thomas Kelly

Climbing our last mile of a long day, we pass a rock painted with an image of the great Buddhist master, Padmasambhava. A white peak of the Shringi Himal appears, lit by late light. We enter a village gateway: bright green fields spread out before us, with clusters of tall trees in spring leaf, monasteries, and stone houses beyond. A cheerful man in bare feet greets us and invites us to his home. His name is Dorje and he belongs to the royal family of Prok.

Our intuition that this village named Prok is a treasured place within a *beyul*, a hidden valley, is confirmed when we chat with our host that evening. It is believed that Padmasambhava, who introduced Buddhism to Tibet in the 8th century, hid many valleys called *beyul* throughout the Himalayan region and provided such forces as snowstorms and mist to protect them. These treasured and peaceful valleys would be discovered once the world faced destruction, hatred and lawlessness.

The stone house sheltering us was once the palace of the king of the Nubri valley. Though Dorje was born a prince, he practices as the village *amchi* (traditional healer). His daughter Jhangchuk, schooled in Kathmandu, alternately consults as a health researcher and gathers fodder in the forest. The kitchen shelves that are chock-full of brass plates and cooking utensils, also hold a TV. We break our discussion of Jhangchuk’s maternal nutrition research to watch the horrors of the corona virus as it is being reported on BBC. The climbing number of cases in the US is relevant to this family: the elder daughter is employed as a babysitter in New York City.

Traveling with me to Prok is my friend and co-author, photojournalist Thomas Kelly. On the sunlit morning of the next day, Thomas photographs Dorje’s family altar and an image of his father, the king. Dorje shows him his scar from a bear attack and describes how the village was wracked by earthquake. He points out his photo with the Dalai Lama. The conversation deepens our understanding

of how lives are led here in Prok. Hardships balanced out by faith: Dorje is reading his prayers when Jhangchuk guides us to a monastery that the community has reinforced with ample cement. Even though the *beyul* was not spared the earthquake, people here survived.

A principal from a school in Kathmandu joins us. He is on his way to visit his grandpa in a village tucked in the forest high above. In that remote village the elders meditate and live peacefully, and the principal deems it the safest possible refuge from coronavirus.

At the end of our tour with Jhangchuk, Thomas and I discuss what to do. We have been trekking for over a week by the time we’ve arrived in Prok. Since Kathmandu has gone under full lockdown over the virus, should we even try to get back to our homes there? What if we were to suggest to our guide and two porters that we should all explore the *beyul* at least for another week?

But we pack our bags and press on. Weeks later we will both find ourselves thinking back on Prok. And Jhangchuk will be communicating with us by Messenger. She will send a video from a recent ceremony supported by donations collected from the villagers. We will play that video many times, watching the monks of Prok performing masked dances, dancing to keep the corona virus at bay.

Our trekking group originally numbers six. We receive our trekking permits on the last day for the season. The country is just beginning to take measures to curb COVID-19 (which people here tend to simply call “corona”). We have all wanted to trek the famous Manaslu circuit before the road being constructed through it to Tibet drastically alters the landscape, interrupting the ancient trail of salt traders and their mules. So in early spring our group is ascending the steep valley cut by the raging Budi Gandaki. We have the support of our experienced guide Manshanta, and two porters, Lucky and JB.

“Mules coming!” Manshanta shouts and we press ourselves to the inner side of the cliff as a train of mules comes jingling

through, oblivious to us if not wholly impolite. The mule herders are fit young men with smart haircuts and t-shirts promoting rock bands. Like the mules, their future will be uncertain once there is a road.

The mules’ days have grown more arduous since the 2015 earthquake. Now they carry loads of rebar and other building material. Thomas and I have not travelled together since we completed a book, *Himalayan Style*, about vernacular architecture of the Himalayas. On day three we pass through the poor village of Rana where nearly every house is under construction. New roofs in Rana and other villages are bright blue metal sheeting. Gone is the integrity of traditional building, but in its place is something lighter, safer. First the earthquake, then the road and now coronavirus: I have always resisted calling the people of Nepal “resilient”, as it implies they have a choice. But here in Rana is evidence of how people endure, adapt, rebuild.

In the villages of Bihi there is WiFi powered by solar panels. I call my husband who is in Kathmandu nursing a broken leg. Thomas only reaches the answering phone of his father who is spending his 99th birthday in quarantine at a nursing home in New Mexico. A heavy rain falls throughout the night, almost ensuring that the Larke pass, our crossing point to the next valley, will be blocked by snow. Our group discusses flying home by helicopter. As we lie at night with rain pounding on the new metal roof, we face all our fears about what the future holds.

But crossing the village of Namrung the next day, we enter a new realm: entrances to villages are marked by Khanyi, gateway chortens on which the painted eyes of Buddha look protectively in four directions. We are now in the Nubri valley, distinguished culturally from Kutang as people here are descendants of Tibetans. The famous mountains of the region, Himalchuli (7,893m) and Manaslu (8,156m) rise before us. The trail becomes treacherous and were we to slip we would sail down the snowy cliff to the river. When

TREKKING IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS:

(clockwise from top) A long mani wall and series of chortens borders the village protectively along the valley rim. It is here I find myself late in the day, circumambulating the wall, saying prayers for my family, for Nepal, for the world.

The bridge to Nubri with Mt Manaslu ‘The Mountain of the Spirit’.

Snow on our trail becomes deeper on the trail to Samdo. An avalanche in 1993 destroyed the Pungyen Gompa, killing many. Local people said that the mountain was angry because of trespassing.

Dorje’s Hotel in Prok where Tsering Bhuti squats by the hearth to cook us rice, *dal* and greens from their vegetable patch. A cat nestles close to the fire.

Dorje at the family altar holding an image of his father, the previous King of Prok.

The death ceremony on the seventh day of the strengthens us before we journey on.

Corona Awareness Program at Jagat village tests weight, blood pressure and temperature of trekkers. A tv at our lunch spot announces the numbers of deaths in Italy and the US.





of the spirit

A Himalayan trek in the time of coronavirus is a reminder of connection, faith and vulnerability

at last we arrive in the large settlement of Samagaon, we receive news that Larke Pass is closed for the season: too much snow and a lack of tourists. The choice is to retrace our steps or helicopter out. While our friends decide to pack their bags, Thomas and I set off to explore Samagaon.

We follow the call of a conch shell to a juniper grove above the village. Through the dense fog we see monks and nuns hurrying to take their places inside an ancient *gompa*. We enter shyly, respectfully, to listen to the chanting, drums, and murmured prayers, and to absorb the mood of peace. Rituals are being performed for a villager who died 49 days ago.

When we return there the next morning, the worshippers share with us their butter tea and *tsampa*. We observe the offering of a *torma* in a ritual to help the deceased reach the afterlife. A young monk places the *torma* on a white-washed wall. Crows descend to peck at it, knocking it to the ground where it is consumed by a mangy dog.

From the *gompa* I watch tiny figures, our trekking mates, boarding a helicopter parked in a Samagaon field. The helicopter rises and makes a wide circle over us. I wave. With my friends suspended in the air, the solemn rituals following death, and the shared disquiet over the virus, life has never felt more fragile. As the helicopter vanishes into clouds, my tears come hard.

"Connection, Faith, Vulnerability". These words come to me swiftly as my friends lift from the mountains to their families in the city. For Thomas and me it will be many days before we reach home. I reflect on faith: it is what the death ceremony has strengthened in us before we journey on.



By afternoon we are passing a long prayer wall in the *kermo kharka* and our trail is thick with snow. As the peaks rise all around us we feel like Lilliputians in a large white bowl. We cross avalanches, none too recent but one after another, and are stunned by the peaks surrounding us.

Three lammageiers hunt in the fields as

we approach the village of Samdo. Lucky waves from the entry gate. He has found the only guesthouse that is open. It is hardly a refuge: the solar power is frozen and crampons are required to climb the icy steps to the bedrooms. It is run by twin brothers, Pemba who studied hotel management in Kathmandu and Dorje who remained at home. Now the brothers are reunited, sharing fears that the virus could even reach a place as inhospitable as Samdo.

In the morning we are not too woeful to return back down the valley. In my crampons I fly across the trail, re-crossing several avalanches, thrilled by the views. But the news in Samagaon is bleak: the whole country is in lockdown. I call my husband who is chirpy: "No need to hurry back. Enjoy!" For Manshanta the news brings increased responsibility and he worries how to get us all home safely.

We continue past families lounging in the sun on the terraces of their earthquake-damaged houses. "Why should we work if we are going to die?" they joke. With their mobile phones they track the progress of their children coming home from schools in Kathmandu. As we descend the trail, local people are working together to dig steps and spread pine needles on the steepest and snowiest sections, ensuring a safe passage.

The school children from Nubri are among an estimated 1.5 million people who set out from Kathmandu just before it went into lockdown. "I was training to be a bartender," a young man on the trail tells me. "But there is no work now." He hurries to catch up with his charges, four little boys who throw snowballs. "Have a good life!" he calls back to me.

In Lho we find Pasang Diki weaving *pangden*. Her focus is on keeping straight the order of colours in her stripes, but now and then she turns her gaze to her four children who play cricket in front of her empty guesthouse. Two of the children have not returned home for five years. The mood is jubilant: only because of school closings have the children had this chance to play together.

The next day finds us in the peaceful village of Prok and our point of indecision: to

stay in a realm of apparent safety or to head home.



In fact we could not have left the haven of Prok so easily, had we not been tempted by images of Serang Monastery that Jhangchuk shows us on her mobile phone. There, wild goral eats from your hand and the forest is resplendent with rhododendrons of all colours. But soon after leaving Prok, Manshanta receives two calls. "There is the good news and the bad news," he announces. The bad news is that Serang monastery has closed to all outsiders. The good news is that the American Embassy and the Nepal Tourism Board can help organise your rescue."

The thought of being rescued from a *beyul*, with its mountain peaks, majestic cliffs and mighty river, depresses us entirely. The sky, in which clouds had been building, unleashes heavy rain and the solar power goes out. We head early to bed feeling out of options: it is time to return to Kathmandu.

Following the hard rain, birds are singing heartily as we set off the next morning. Now we meet the cook and the house cleaner from the guesthouse in Lho and the cook of our lunch in Pewa: the tourist season had not even begun before their jobs ended abruptly. "Good luck! Take care!" we call to each other, like old friends. I repeat my mantra: *Vulnerability, Faith, Connection*.

Arriving in the village of Jagat we have our weight, blood pressure and temperature tested in the Jagat Corona Awareness Program and then continue on in mid-day heat. Lucky and JB stop for cold Mountain Dew at a little café perched on the edge of a cliff. The proprietor laments there are no tourists buying her chips and drinks. She sits with her two little children, fear in her eyes. "How will I feed them if this goes on? And what if my children catch corona? Hospitals are so far away."

Her fears are echoed by the roadworkers we pass who have been let go without pay, and the mule herders who have no more business. Back in Tatopani we have to coax Kalini and Sarita to reopen their lodge for us.

On our last day we hike through the rubble of the new road down to Machha Khola. A Great Barbet is calling and tall trees have come into bright leaf. We pass nomad shepherds moving their sheep up the valley just as they always have done come spring. Thomas photographs the groups of school children heading up to Nubri, the desperate hotel owners, the out-of-work mules, and the village people who wear masks and turn away from us.

Our journey has finished abruptly and a car will fetch us soon. We look backwards up the valley to the mountain peaks. The valley thrums with old rhythms as well as the certainty of change.

Today I focus on *faith*, which is alive in the villages, spreading from the monasteries, bringing strength to people so that they can endure the days and years to come.



Seven weeks later we remain confined in our homes on opposite sides of the Kathmandu Valley. The lockdown has been extended yet again. Thomas phones his father whose heart is weakening and decides it is time to find a flight out of Nepal. My husband's broken leg has improved and he goes out on his bicycle to find us food. Lucky and I have become Facebook friends, and Manshanta sends me updates on bird sightings.

We read of Nepali migrant labourers stranded in the Gulf states and of daily-wage earners all around Nepal who cannot afford to buy food. The virus is starting to spread rapidly and we wonder about the people we met on our trek. Yet according to the news, the virus has not reached mountainous regions. Jhangchuk sends photos of fields in Prok that are now deep green. May it be true that in his infinite wisdom many centuries ago, Padmasambhava established the *beyul*, the hidden valleys that offer protection when the world is in deep trouble. 🇳🇵

Americans **Thomas Kelly**, photographer, and **Claire Burkert**, writer, have lived and worked in Nepal for a combined total of 80 years.



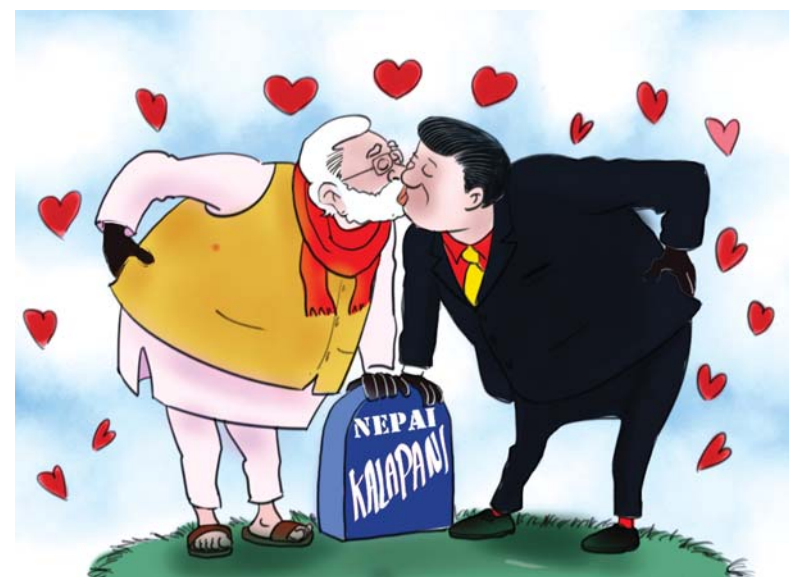
Challenges for PM Oli.
Abin Shrestha in *Kantipur*, 25 May



Modi to media: Repeat after me, parrot.
Basu Kshitij in *Annapurna Post*, 13 May



Phalano in *Barakhari*, 18 May



Diwakar Chettri in *Nepali Times*, 26 May



Rabin Sayami in *Nagarik*, 14 May

Reporter: It has been a while since India started making the road in Lipu Lekh
PM: I didn't know, I was in hospital
Reporter: But they launched the road with much fanfare?
PM: I was in hospital, no one told me anything
Reporter: Was China's involved?
PM: I don't that either, I was in hospital.
Reporter: What would you have done if you knew?
PM: Powerful statement would have been released, from the hospital.



Indian Mass Media: ~~Media~~ Modi
Rabi Mishra in *Naya Patrika*, 22 May

Nepali cartoonists poke India over Kalapani

Much smaller Nepal gets back at India on border row using the power of satire

Kunda Dixit

A festering row between India and Nepal over a section of their Himalayan border has seen an eruption of cartoons in the Nepali media that poke fun at India's claim to the territory but also ridicule their own rulers in Kathmandu.

The mainstream media in India and Nepal have staunchly defended their own governments, although the Nepali press has also been unforgiving about lapses by Nepal's rulers over the past 150 years in raising the issue with Britain, and later India.

"A sketch speaks a thousand words, and images leave a more lasting imprint in people's minds than text," explains Rajesh KC, who makes cartoons under the nom de plume *Phalano* in the portal, *barakhari.com*. "The Kalapani issue is made for satire because Nepal is the underdog and the only way it can hit back is by making fun of the stronger side."

Indeed, most Nepali cartoonists have



Rabin Sayami at his office in *Nagarik* daily preparing a cartoon for the paper's next day's edition.

joined this David vs Goliath fight with sketches that deride Prime Minister Modi, Indian Army Chief Navarane, and Indian television talk shows. However, in contrast to Indian mainstream media during this dispute, Nepal's cartoonists have reserved their sharpest barbs for their own leaders.

"This gives Nepal's media much more credibility, it shows that we are free enough to criticise our own rulers at a sensitive time



Rajesh KC (*Phalano*) working at home on Tuesday with his digital stylus on an animated cartoon on the Nepal-India border spat for *barakhari.com*

like this," says Rabin Sayami, whose cartoons in *Nagarik* daily relentlessly lampoon Prime Minister Oli. Sayami says that the message in his cartoons is that politicians on both sides are using the border row for political benefit, and to distract attention from the larger challenge of addressing economic concerns of their people during the COVID-19 lockdown. "And let's hope the Indian media also gets the message," he adds. The images they create

provide a powerful tool to get the message across quicker and more effectively than a long text-based analysis.

"An editorial cartoonist needs to incorporate three components: art, journalism and humour," explains KC, who received a severe reprimand in 2008 from the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu for lampooning Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in a *Kantipur* cartoon about another border dispute with India over the Susta corridor.

It is because cartoons are so effective in exposing hypocrisy, telling truth to power, and making people laugh, that those who are the butt of jokes sometimes cannot take it.

Nepali Times cartoonist Diwakar Chhetri often depicts both India and China as bullying tiny Nepal. He says: "Cartoons are actions, and the pictures are more powerful than words because they use satire, irony, metaphors to add flavour to the unvarnished truth. It is a cartoon's bold honesty that makes it such a powerful medium." 🇳🇵