20 YEARS AGO

T he first print edition of Nepali Times of 19-25 July 2000 showed that even though much has changed in Nepal in the past two decades, a lot has remained the same. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. Reports and op-eds published in that very first hardcopy issue are as relevant today as they were then. Most of the protagonists are the same.

The front page analysis of the first edition looked at the impending state visit to India by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. Among the contentious issues he was going to take up with Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee: the Kalapani territory occupied by India. The dispute flared again this year, and sank bilateral ties to a new low.

Then, as now, the Indian media was primed before Koirala’s visit with government leaks about his intentions. The debate then was similar to the current discussion — more about when, not if, Koirala would visit India until Indian troops are withdrawn from Kalapani, and he is rushing them.

The Editorial of the first print edition of Nepali Times laid out the new paper’s vision: ‘A newspaper does more than hold a mirror to society. It becomes a mirror itself. There is a belief literature is a reflection of exaggerated self-worth. Despair is much worse, it is a state of mind. Journalism is indeed history in a hurry. And those who do not learn from it are doomed to repeat it. Those who do not put their cards on the table are those who do not play.’

The first issue also included an investigation into a scandal at the Kathmandu office of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) in which an expat employee was secretly sacked for embezzlement.

Another intriguing story was about reports that underground Maoist leader Prachanda had visited UK on an Indian passport to attend a meeting of the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM).

Water resources expert Dipak Gyawali argued in a commentary that private power producers should not be designing projects to export electricity to India, but for domestic value-added use. Dipak Gyawali had these lines from Bimal Nibha: ‘A worker who delights and weeps for domestic use, who drinks tea and rushes off to write poems, who drinks tea and rushes off to write poems, who drinks tea and rushes off to write poems.’

Water resources expert Dipak Gyawali argued in a commentary that private power producers should not be designing projects to export electricity to India, but for domestic value-added use. Water resources expert Dipak Gyawali argued in a commentary that private power producers should not be designing projects to export electricity to India, but for domestic value-added use.

COVID-19 is the main global health issue today, but 20 years ago it was HIV/AIDS, and the paper carried a report on new anti-retroviral therapy not being affordable in poor countries.

Manjushree Thapa started her ‘Nepaliiterature’ in which she profiled writers in the Nepali language with translated excerpts of their work. The first installment had these lines from Bimal Nibha: ‘Comrade Baburam Bhattarai is busy leading the People’s War. Am wondering — as do many others — if I am an ordinary person who writes the words men write, points Who drinks tea and rushes off. A worker who delights and weeps. With ardor and effort. Writing exceptional about me. I am not engaged in a people’s war. Comrade?’

Nepali Times also got rights to serialise chapters from Desmond Doig’s book In the Kingdom of the Gods, and the first installment carried his description of Jung Bahadur’s Mahabai-style Kat Mochan temple, which a western visitor once said was ‘too ugly to describe.’

The back page ‘Funny Side Up’ fixture started with a satire column on legalising corruption. It recommended taxing bribes and slapping 13% VAT on haldood in order to raise government revenue.

From this week, the ‘10 Year Ago’ column in Nepali Times is being replaced with ‘20 Years Ago’. It will look at Nepal from two decades ago, and how the country was getting mired deeper in conflict, tourism was being affected by the uncertainty, political disarray was eroding democratic gains, and corruption was becoming rampant. The seeds of today’s crises were sown then.

Journalism is indeed history in a hurry. And those who do not learn from it are doomed to repeat it. Kunda Dixit
Zip it

Why Prime Minister KP Oli decided to use the birth anniversary of Durga Bhahushahi Acharya on Monday to get embroiled in what he should have known would create a huge backlash in India is not known. We can only speculate. As Oli put forth the wild theory that the mythical Hindu god Ram was born in Nepal, and that the kingdom of Ayodhya where his family ruled was actually in present day Chitwan district near the Indian border. This could have innocently meant it out after being carried away by a receptive audience that was laughing at his repertoire. This was a function celebrating the Nepal League party as one of the unifying pillars of multiplicity; so it is much more likely that Oli brought up Ayodhya to fall back on national sentiments. This has always been his default button when he faces a domestic political crisis, or challenges to his authority from rivals within his own Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

Either way, the remarks generated a storm of outrage in India where Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Hindu Right-Side BJP has itself politicised the Ram Janmabhoomi temple at Lord Ram’s birth site in Ayodhya.

In Nepal also, the outrage backfaced on the prime minister who has been ridiculed on social media with attacks and memes. Even Oli’s own supporters have called the remarks ill-timed and detrimental in getting Nepal-India relations back on track.

Oli could have been attacked by Indian officials and television news channels which have been denouncing him ever since he confronted New Delhi over the Limpiyadhura corridor that is occupied by India.

Faced with brewing mutiny led by co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal in May, Oli used the anger in Nepal against the Indian move and defied New Delhi by calling all parties to a joint representative meeting last month. He accused New Delhi of trying to unsettle him, and threatened to split his party by re-registering the old UML at the Election Commission.

It is not in Nepal’s national interest to add an ego boost to the top of the ruling party to impact any more on its geo-strategic survival.

Chinese Ambassador in Nepal Hou Yanqi then had a slew of meetings with President Bidya Devi Bhandari, Dahal and NCP comrades opposed to Oli. She carried a message from Chinese President Xi Jinping saying that splitting the past would be a bad idea.

Indian tv channels and troll factories on social media then launched an all-out war directed solely at Oli, and openly calling for his removal from the country’s tv channels seven had严重地 damaged Oli’s reputation showing Ambassador Hou and Oli inside a Valentine’s Day heart. Nepal’s close-to-home tv operators then pulled the plug on all Indian news channels.

What had so far been an escalating Geo spat has now turned many Indians against Nepal’s, Oli government. Oli should have known better than to drag an expansive mixture of religion and politics to a fully volatile Relationship.

Over the past two and half years, the NCP’s survival strategy has been to keep both neighbours at arm’s length by maintaining cordial relations and balancing relationships with them, but graphics showing the Ambassadors in the TV heart, Nepal’s close-to-home channels then pulled the plug on all Indian news channels. Again, this time, it will take a lot more than the Foreign Ministry’s clarification to undo the damage.

The Ayodhya reference also came during a tense ceasefire between Oli and Dahal as a result of Ambassador Bhandari’s meetings last week. Loyalists on both sides now say they do not want to split the party, but the real issue has always been what will be the give-and-take between Oli and Dahal that will keep the party united.

At the heart of the dispute is Dahal’s imposition to head the government on any coalition or party. He had banked on Oli’s health deteriorating to such an extent that he would automatically take over. He did not expect to drag on for so long, and Oli seems to have come out physically stronger after his second kidney transplants in the last six months.

It is not in Nepal’s national interest to add an ego boost to the top of the ruling party to impact any more on its geo-strategic survival.

Light at the end of the Melamchhi tunnel

Nepal’s water supply projects are nearly ready for operation with most of the work complete. At this rate it may be possible to send water to Kathmandu by December this year, the full capacity of a giant in a tunnel but killed two technicians on Saturday evening.

Most popular on Twitter

Grass is greener in Nepal

Nepal’s banks offer consumer loans, savings and consumption was crumbled. Nepal is losing its long battle against illegal drugs that also have medical applications in Eighty Covid. This does not seem an instant which was the report on the story and went in Nepali newspapers.

Most visited online page

The long journey back to Nepal

Nepal’s prime minister and his first experience flying home on a commercial flight by the Air India, I stopped responding to the comments in Maryland and Nepal in Nepal-Nike's photos significant with a great deal of comments online, now join the discussion.

Most commented

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

2001: Oli's first visit to India

1993: Dr Chandra Bahadur Datta

1979: The world's first commercial flight by the British Airline company among 106 countries in 2005, and 1979, it was the first beam to be truly traveling from Afghanistan. The plane of the flight landed in Kyrgyzstan.

Most popular

By Jahanara Ahmad

Most visited

END

ONLINE PACKAGES

VOLUNTEERS TO THE RESCUE

Catching food at a Tarai location, international volunteer Anand Narayanan atop a tree is up to 12 feet during floods. In the volunteer who can’t wait to return to Nepal to continue his work. Work done by UN relief aid in various humanitarian crises (story page 8). T coincidence is heavy rainfall. Story page 7.

COVID-19 REPAIATATION

The authors of the articles have written everything there is to know right from the US to the building centres in Nepal: The long journey back to Nepal, Naam Rastriya and Rishi Bhandari (1018). Accompanying videos of the lavish and beggars claim it helps save 500 lives at the site of the airport.

Nabin Paudyal

- Having gone through hours of waiting to get through customs at Kathmandu airport last week, before COVID-19 I have the greatest sympathy for what the entire region need to endure home. Great art here. Thank you.

Annie Campbell

- This article sheds light on what is happening around the world. It is in a natural. the article gives us a message about how we should travel safely during this global emergency.

Shilpa Neupane

- I largely agree about the lack of centralised system to collect information from passengers.

Ejibre Chachang

- There seems to be good initiatives on repatriation, but the logistical and implementation seems weaker. This problem with the need to be addressed immediately.

Rwacha Githire

LEGALINE CANNABIS

Cannabis, in hush-toned form, particularly, is Rodia’s primary cash crop (Rodia, the grower in Nepal, Sonia Awekar, 1991). The 1976 ban (along with WHO’s long history of overall neglect) explains why the district sided so solidly with the rebels during the 1990-2006 Maoist war. Giving in to US pressure to outlaw cannabis created an unintended consequence of forcing the dynamic that eventually ousted the Shim rebels.

David Mason

- The US pressured Nepal to stop the cultivation of marijuana 50 years ago as a condition to provide aid to the government of the country and to promote the sale of tobacco. The medical properties of the plant are already well known and the Nepal government’s decision to start commercial production can only be a good thing.

Gary Womul

- It must be legalised under certain terms and conditions for national properity.

TR Kathiward

- Farmers and local governments used to take good care of the ganja fields. Tax on ganja produced a good revenue stream.

Hark Lazy

POOR GOVERNANCE

Enough is Enough is just a small example of youth power. If the interface of politics and science, Anil Chitrakar (2018), if the politicians fail to understand this and the rise of young people in Nepal’s revolutions, then surely this is a sign of their downfall.

Ravindra Shyams

- Another one that’s hit the mark. But then Anil Dal it gets it with amazing accuracy every week.

Raj Gyawali

VISIT NEPAL ONLINE

NEPAL, the excellent destination for ‘Visit Nepal virtually 2027’. Make sure you visit our pages (page 10). Tips on how to work out and stay safe even though these extremely tiresome times of hardship.

Jennifer von der Helm

WOMEN MAHER

That’s it! That’s the wallpaper that holds Nepal back. Don’t follow my footsteps, says female method.

Mushtak (timesnewroman.com). Why the luck she deserves in finding a new job.

Sam Vincent

QUOTE & TWEETS

Nepali Times (Nepali Times)

The week’s best tweets: “Nepal’s high water levels in the river have been due to the increase in rainfall. We need to be cautious. Water levels in rivers are expected to rise in the near future.”

Santosh Chhetri (santoshchhetri)

- Nepal is losing its long battle against illegal drugs that also have medical applications in Eighty Covid.

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SO FAR SO GOOD Lisa Choegyal

The freedom of the well worn Hippie Trail of the early 1970s, overland from Istanbul to Kathmandu, seems unimaginable in today’s world of COVID-19 travel restrictions—during this pandemic we can only dream of the joys of the open road.

From the mid-1960s, hippies in search of Shangri-La buzzed or hitchhiked through Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India before culminating in our Valley paradise, the end of the road. They came in tens of thousands pouring enlightenment, peace, tasting freedom, escaping conformity, defying convention or finding the Dharma, packed into gaily-painted kombi vans, busses and trucks resonating with Bob Dylan and Van Morrison.

Constrained by centuries of insecurity and conflict, the turbulent regimes along this overland route learned little from their legacy, persisting in more war than peace, more hate than love. Coinciding with the Height-Askhy movement, the spirit of hostilities presented a brief window of opportunity. Seldom has this section of the Silk Road been safe for travellers to transit since Marco Polo passed this way, protected by the Mongol Khan’s engaged tribal liaison officer – a brilliant Tony Jones was one of the first to capitalize on the trend, organizing truckloads of punters to drive to Kathmandu in his escaped converted Encounter Overland vehicles. Keen to know more, one spring morning over a decade ago, I set on a yellow cushioned cane chair in the garden of a dilapidated homestead just outside Nuwakot. The neat rows of vegetables and ranks of blossoming fruit trees in the orchard reflected Tony’s British army background.

Long settled in Pokhara, Tony was in the process of converting the Famous Farm, named with his game-changing Old Inn which he had cleverly and carefully restored in the centre of Bandipur, the original inspiration of the tourist renaissance of that by-passed Newer trading town. Tony and his team pioneered rural heritage accommodation in historic village houses.

“There’s good chap, do get a move on, chito da!” Tony Jones was banging off a carved balcony of the rambling Newer Farmhouse, waving his hammer and yelling at Laxman who laboured up the narrow staircase under a pile of wooden planks. Grinning, Laxman dumped them neatly on the exposed beams at Tony’s feet. Together, they laid and nailed them into place. Puffing with exertion, Tony continued to build in Nepal interpenetrated with English cockney explosives.

Distracted by the hammering but enjoying the banter, his wife and I shared a complimentary pot of tea. I wanted to know more about managing the logistics of these unique overland operations, plus

NEPAL WHEREVER YOU ARE.

 niece was planning a big drive from UK to Mongolia in a beat up old car.

“Two pieces of advice for your fun driving to Ulaanbaatar. First be careful not to cross the Thames too many times as you leave London – most of my drivers get lost on their way to Folkstone before even reaching the English Channel!” Tony has a deep depreciating laugh, his eyes glinting as he remembered those few off days despaching trackwicks of eager overlanders.

“Nor be the last in a convoy of vehicles Paul,” which is exactly what happened to niece when his engine failed going over a river on the edge of the Gobi Desert, and he sat powerless and increasingly desperate whilst his mates disappeared over the sandy horizon – but that’s another story.

The Hippie Trail’s terminus was Shochuken, Pokhara and I arrived there from the opposite direction towards the end of their era in March 1974. Have travelled by Bali train through Malaysia and Thailand, my first glimpse of the throned emerald Valley was through the glistening windows of a United Romania Airways plane from Yangon. As we circled over the rice terraces, the afternoon sun glinted off the golden spires of swayambhunath and the white dome of Bodh Gaya flashed beneath us. The long-haired, bearded, colourfully-clad, chattering taxi-hailing hippies thronging the medieval streets of Bhaktapur when I first arrived in Kathmandu were no doubt free spirits, dropping out and hanging loose. Joins were rolled openly on table tops, ganja was legal and hashish-laced cookies featured on menus in the cafes, restaurants and pie shops amongst the westerners that had flourished to cater to their alternative needs.

More interested in getting high and higher trekking than tripping, I soon grew impatient with the smoke blurred far-out cross-legged postures, checked out of my six pound a night City Lodge, and headed for the hills. But it is simplistic and misleading, drugs came to Nepal only for the dope. They were also used in the long history of Nepal’s medical practice. Wherever you are, the occasional vintage car can be found.

The demise of Kathmandu’s hippie scene was not only precipitated by President Nixon’s global crusade against drugs that leveraged Nepal’s leaders to ban cannabis, marijuana was the harder stuff, but more that King Birendra welcomed the Valleys tidied up prior to the arrival of royal guests and world dignitaries for the last state coronation.

By the time he and the Queen were on their jewel-encrusted elephant on the suspicious date of 4 February 1972 their death knell had sounded, visitor visas had been revoked and the hippies had departed. When I came back in late 1972 the hippies were still to be found in Nepal – explorers, entrepreneurs, art dealers, dress designers and devout students of Hindu and Buddhist philosophy. Many returned later in life with respectful friends and families to holiday in the ultimate destination of their earthly youth. Though the hippie subculture usefully kick-started Nepal’s nascent tourism with both American dollars and an enduring flower-power image, there are some who would like to this day, including Tony Jones and myself, although neither of us would consider ourselves successful hippies. We just happened to be around at the time.
Don’t just blame God for floods and landslides

Casualties are going up every monsoon season due to haphazard infrastructure construction

Diya Rijal

T
his year’s monsoon rains started early, and have been heavy. But total precipitation for June and the rainfall recorded for the past five days in Central Nepal have not been above normal.

Kathmandu Valley saw 70mm of rain between 5-13 July, which is about normal for this time of year.

Many of the deadly landslides this week were triggered by haphazard road construction that disturbed the slopes, while in the plains floods have been made worse by poorly designed roads, urbanisation of floodplains, deforestation and sand extraction in the river valley, and uncontrolled building across the border in India.

The rivers all flow down from the Churia, and the soil erosion is raising the level of the river beds, making flooding of the fertile farms of the Tarai worse,” says Nagdev Yadav of the Community Development and Advocacy Forum in Province 2.

After the 2017 flood, a study by Practical Action concluded: “The increased intensity of the flood impact was caused by improper drainage system in cities, cross-border embankment, and elevated roads in border areas, causing more inundations in the Tarai.”

Co-author of that study, climate risk expert Madhav Upreti adds that this year saw 39% higher pre-monsoon precipitation at Muktinath.

May. The top soil on mountain slopes were eroded away and saturated when the main monsoon hit, making them prone to landslide. The Nepal Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NRMA) has already 120 major landslides from June 14 to July 8. So far, the death toll is 122 and 40 missing with many injured.

Experts have analysed the deadly flash-flood on two tributaries of the Bhote Kosi on the night of 7 July conclude that a combination of heavy rain and bed engineering on a road up the mountain caused the sudden collapse.

“We are actually concerned on how many areas are affected and how many people are affected,” said Upreti. “The reason is that many areas are affected and that many people are affected.”

The Nepali Red Cross has accounted for 595,000 landslide victims and 60,000 flood victims in the past two weeks.

The Nepal Red Cross, accounted for a fifth.

Volunteer Corps Nepal (VCN) currently has 500 volunteers on standby in Saptari to respond to flooding. “Our concern is to prevent deaths, so we have alerted our volunteers to evacuate people to safe areas, and set up emergency services,” VCN said.

VCN was the first organisation to arrive in Saptari after the deadly landslides last week devastated the area. It used helicopters and drones to rescue the impacted community. The government gave it an additional 1,000,000 rupees to improve its efforts.

“VCN did not have the resources to operate on its own, but it was able to mobilise all the other organisations to work together,” said a government official.

VCN includes more than 3,000 trained local volunteers and a wider network of 6,000-plus people in 77 districts, and is increasingly relying on funding from within Nepal to run its operations, notes Chauhan.

“Big donors stopped giving four months ago because they were affected by COVID, and we got small funds from foundations and individuals but they become big when they come from many people,” he adds.

“For some of the project donors, they have been forced to shell out more money for the project, but they continue to give, and our team is working hard to get more funds.”

“Within lockdown response, more than in quiet times, international partners are helping us to improve our campaigns and support the communities.”

This means shifting perspectives from one with international resource flows at the core to one where households and affected communities are at the centre of how responses are planned and funded. Aid should be used not just to respond but to catalyse better and more effective use of flows beyond aid, which may be the best way to localise the response.

Chauhan wants big donors to start putting money into rescue efforts. “We were the first responders in Saptari... when the road is clear other organisations will arrive as well but there is no sense in going then, they need to reach immediately so they can save the lives.”

Volunteers to the rescue in Nepal’s flood season

Report says international humanitarian assistance makes up only 1% of aid during disasters, and should complement local efforts

Marty Logan

A ccustomed to seeing slick press releases, releasing multimillion-dollar aid response of donors agencies, many assume they are leading rescue and recovery efforts. A report last year suggests otherwise.

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) research suggests that international humanitarian assistance accounts for as little as 1% of aid during disasters. Other sources provide the rest, including:

- Monetary and in-kind aid raised by crisis-affected individuals and communities
- Remittances from family members abroad
- Labor and national governments
- Informal aid, including volunteering, philanthropy and faith-based giving.

A related ODI article that focused on aid in Nepal’s Saptari district following the 2017 floods described the “resilience of the western system of the UN and INGOs played only a minor role, according to the head of the UN’s Nepali NGO, particularly the Nepali Red Cross, accounted for a fifth.”

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Visit Nepal (Virtually) 2020

Bardia Homestay’s online guided tours are the next best thing to going to Nepal in-person this year.

Mukesh Pokhrel in Bardia

For travellers whose Visit Nepal plans in 2020 were scrapped by the pandemic, Bardia Homestay, one of Nepal’s Tari plateaus into living rooms around the world through virtual tours.

Co-owners Sonja Rusticus and Bijan Daruargi launched the virtual tours of Tari during the long hours under lockdown with no in-person tourists visiting the Bardia National Park to admire its abundant biodiversity and indigenous Tharu culture.

“The next best thing to being in Bardia yourself, and it will also generate income at a time when there are no tourists so we do not have to lay off staff,” says Daruargi who set up Bardia Homestay six years ago during the same two-decade experience as a tour guide with Rusticus’ entrepreneurial expertise.

The tours come with cooking lessons in local cuisine, farming tours, wildlife safaris and cultural tours. Bardia Homestay, together with Dutch tour operator Travel Nepal, created the tourism platform MyNepal online, of which the virtual tours are a part.

For £8.50 per person, the 40-minute long farm tours involve rice planting, harvesting, deer-watching and bird-watching by fields using zoom. Local Tharu guides take trekkers on virtual walks through the lush Bardia countryside while explaining traditional farming methods.

The jungle walks also cost the same, but online tourists will accompany guides as they walk Bardia’s abundant wildlife, including swamp deer, ghost cranes, crocodiles, black bucks, brown herons and rhinoceros. And if it is your lucky day you get rare sightings of the tiger or the endangered Ganges freshwater dolphins.

In the simulated safari, guests will follow guides as they go deep into the jungle, peer through overhead canopies, tip-pee along the Kathmandu’s on-lake bower, and wade through grasslands. The guide also explain the various vegetation zones of the National Park, as well as the conservation research efforts underway there with Himalayan Tiger Foundation based in The Netherlands.

Slightly more expensive at £15 per person are cooking lessons for Nepali dishes such as dal bhat, Tharu specialties including fresh water mussels, snails and tiny crabs, accompanied by someone’s rice.

“We try to make the live virtual tours as real as possible with two cameras,” Daruargi explains. One is a GoPro on the guide so guests see what he sees, while the other focuses on the guide as he describes the tour. The online excursions use the Zoom application, and last 40 minutes each.

Rusticus and Daruargi were inspired by the success of virtual city tours and cooking classes in Europe. Says Rusticus: “Their methods and approach to guiding impressed us, so we wanted to bring such tours to our homestay.”

Most of those have signed up so far are Dutch tourists among the 400 most recent visitors to the Bardia Homestay, and they have been happy to relive their experience in Nepal.

As information spreads through word of mouth, more and more people are Zooming into Nepal and the Homestay plans to move into the second phase.

“As this is a new experience for us, we are still in the developmental phase,” says Rusticus, “our target group so far has been Dutch nationals but we want to expand now to German, British and others in Europe.”

Virtual tours also allow Bardia Homestay to generate some revenue and retain employees at a time when most companies in the hospitality business in Nepal have been forced to close or reduce staff.

Says Rusticus: “For the moment our virtual tours are just to manage costs during the lockdown so people do not lose jobs. It is not to earn profit.”

The fact that people are signing in to the virtual tours may be a model for other crisis-hit hotels and trekkings agencies in Nepal. There can be virtual trekks, virtual cultural tours of Kathmandu Valley towns and Festivals like Saptapatri on 3 August this year.

There could be virtual pilgrimages to Gokarneshwar on Simhastha which this year falls on 3 August, or even online day-by-day sightseeing along trekking trails after the rains are over.

Qatar Airways

Qatar Airways has welcomed the judgment of the International Court of Justice affirming that the ICAO Council has the jurisdiction to hear any disagreement relating to the interpretation and implementation of the Chicago Convention ‘84 and the International Air Transport Agreement in line with the ruling of the ICJ. Qatar Airways will pursue a case to compensate for the aviation blockade.

Himalaya Airlines

In line with the Government’s permission and authorization mechanisms to long back Nepalis who are stranded due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Himalaya Airlines will operate in three phases of repatriation flights from 16-20 July to ferry stranded Nepalis from Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, Mauritius in Bahrain, as well as ships and Indonesia in Saudi Arabia.

ACCA Report

Future of accountability and finance is set change for the better through an increase in digital transactions, according to Managing the World’s Digital Professional, a report by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and IIF based on a global survey of 4,281 respondents and 15 interviews between April and May 2020.

Ncell Plus

Ncell has launched two new services under its Plus umbrella campaign with pre-paid boarding for its Wi-Fi service through N-cell.

Ncell said its Plus subscribers will enjoy more affordably-rated routes through its voice offer, besides biscuits for prepaid customers, which will allow users to benefit from diverse voice packs with utility of 7 days, 15 days or 30 days.

Samsung A21s

Samsung announced the launch of the Galaxy A21s, the latest addition in its Galaxy A series of 2020 which is packed with a true 40MP quad camera, an Infinity-V Display, and a long-lasting battery.

The Galaxy A21s will be available in black, white, and blue colors at Rs.4999 across Samsung brand shops and retail stores all over Nepal.

Lazmi Bank Network

Lazmi Bank transferred its 511 Lorenson Couriers in the District Court of Rajbiraj, and the network now includes 127 branches, 5 extension couriers, 4 hospital couriers, 413 post offices, and 151 ATMs, 3500 remittance agents, and 61 Scheduled Banking Agencies spread across 46 districts in Nepal. The bank is also rapidly expanding to fulfill the growing demand for professional financial services.

Prabhu Bank

Prabhu Bank has appointed Shekhar Khadka as the new CEO for a three-year term from 25 July. Mr Khadka was previously Assistant General Manager of Nepal Army’s Life Insurance Company.

Sanima Loan Agreement

Sanima Bank and Nepal Infrastructure Bank have signed an agreement for loan of Rs. 2.6 billion which has been raised to increase the capacity of Co-Government Industry (CIG) to cover the local invest in the project as the participating banks to infit Rs. 3 billion.

IME real-time remittance

IME remittance sent via mobiles by users living abroad to mobile wallets and bank accounts in more than 30 Nepal banks and financial institutions can now be deposited in real-time. The service can be accessed through IME’s agent partners in more than 200 countries across the globe.

Reliance AGM

Reliance Life Insurance Ltd held its third annual general meeting on 12 July, Chairman Tara Chandra Karna presided over the general meeting which ratified the annual financial statements and approved the annual financials for the year fiscal 2019/20.

Statement of the Fiscal Year 2019/20, and the profit-loss report. Additionally, the meeting also made an Audit proposal for the current fiscal year, as well as general proposals regarding dividends, allowances to the board of directors and issuing shares to the public.
VIRTUAL HERITAGE TOUR
This installment of the Virtual Heritage Tour series, designed by Story Cycle, will take you on a discovery of Nepal in the west - ideal for skiers, mountaineers and climbers looking for adventures away from the hubbub of the city. Make reservations at https://forms.gle/wkF6xkwk3IVmzAtf6 to register as a Facebook event on Nepal Tourism Board's Facebook page.
1 July - 4pm

ART EXHIBITION
Bikaji Art Center's exhibition '75 Years of the Nepal Contemporary Art Movement' is on display at Bikaji Art Center until 30 June. Online artwork will also be available at bikaji.com. The exhibition will feature the work of nearly 40 Nepali contemporary artists from across the country, 30 July onwards.

FARMERS MARKET AT LE SHERPA
Do your weekly shopping for fresh and healthy vegetables, fruits, cheese, bread, meat products, honey, and much more.
Physical distancing guidelines apply. Daily Saturday, 8am-12:30pm, La Nepal, Kamalpokhari

WRITING WORKSHOP
"Histories from Home: La Harnama to Kathmandu," an online writing workshop for aspiring writers from Nepal and Pakistan aged 18-22, lead by the Quarterly's own Facebook page will fill the form and get details about the theme, and send in a 35-word writing sample. Selected participants will work together for six sessions. More details will be sent to those selected via email. Application deadline 19 July.

ONLINE ARCHIVES

GLOBAL DIGITAL LIBRARY
Looking to learn dried fruits, vegetables while schools remain shut? The Global Digital Library has educational material and storybooks for parents and educators curated according to reading levels, including stories in Maithili, Nepali, and Newari languages.

COMIC GEEK DESTINATIONS
Meet superheroes, villains and giant robots on this Google Earth virtual trip around ten of the most iconic global comic book stores, including the Brussels Comic Book Museum, the Cartoon Art Museum in California, and the Ghibli Museum in Japan.

TRUE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

ECOLOGICAL WITH MISS BOBA

QUARANTINE DINING

MAMMAGOTO NEPAL
Figa Disabola Pan-Asian food from Mamagato, a restaurant that serves a variety of Asian fusion dishes. Order Spring Rolls, Savory, Dumplings, Ramen and more from Foodmanu.
Delivering 7pm to 9:30pm (07) 4886209, 9825098977

TAZA
Bring some Middle Eastern flare to the dining experience. Taza offers Shawarma, Falafel, Hummus, falafella and more - everything from fresh and finger-licking delish. Follow them at @TazaNepal, 9898504757

FLAT IRON GRILL
Although this ealdy is known for their sandwiches, their desserts deserve more recognition. From the cheesecakes to the cookies, Flat Iron Grill offers the best of everything sweet. Get freshly baked goods, hamburgers, sausages, and dairy products delivered. (01) 4112075

YELLOW PAPARO
Order some crispy frits, fish nuggets, buffalo wings, tummy-filling spaghetti, and delicious pizzas from Yellow Paparö. Head to Yellow Paparö’s Facebook page to take a look at more options on the menu. 3872289975

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Order some crispy frits, fish nuggets, buffalo wings, tummy-filling spaghetti, and delicious pizzas from Yellow Paparö. Head to Yellow Paparö’s Facebook page to take a look at more options on the menu. 3872289975

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The rise of Curtis Waters
How a boy from Kathmandu is becoming a stunning international music sensation

Kashish Das Shrestha in San Francisco

S
omewhere out there, at this very moment, there are people listening to Nepali-born Curtis Waters. He is possibly the most infectious single ‘Stunnin’.
In two months, the song has been streamed over 25 million times and is climbing across many Top 40 radio formats around the world. It cracked #3 in Rolling Stone magazine’s Breakout Artist Chart for June.

Last week, it appeared on a Mercedes-Benz advertisement. ‘Things have been moving fast for Waters, who was born Abhi Bhatia, in Kathmandu at the turn of the 21st century when the Internet was still spasmodic. He came of age online and on social media in Germany and North America. Now, at 20, he isn’t just living on the Internet; he has emerged as one of its biggest sensations.

“We are seven weeks in, and ‘Stunnin’ is growing faster than any song released this year,” said Chris Anokute, who discovered Curtis Waters by chance, and is now his manager. “I was about to 25 to 25 weeks to properly cement a song into the marketplace, and another six to nine months to cement the artist. So it’s still early days and we are very excited about the potential of the song to come.”

Anokute would know. He is one of American music industry’s top A&R executives and was central in launching young artists to great enduring success, including Katy Perry, Iggy Azalea and Thalanna.

When he heard ‘Stunnin’ he was captivated. ‘The song sentimentally blew me away,’ he recalled. ‘Like so many times before, he knew that he was listening to an artist that just needed to be discovered by the world. So he reached out. The timing couldn’t have been better.

‘Stunnin’ was not released yet, but more than six months of waiting on it. Waters had just started teasing it out on TikTok by posting snippets. It did not take long for it to go viral. That’s when Waters was flooded with offers from record companies.

“It was an extremely stressful three weeks,” Waters recalled, speaking to Nepali Times about the many simultaneous offers from various major record labels he was suddenly having to figure out. “I would not have been able to navigate this without Chris. For me, I like making music and having fun. He really came through it helping guide me on the business side.”

In the end, Waters decided to stay independent and signed on with Young Forever, Anokute’s artist management company. The first order of business for this new relationship: releasing ‘Stunnin’.

“Stunnin’ is fresh, I liked it instantly,” Rayne, the popular Nepali producer and DJ said. “And its great to see that he could choose to stay independent.”

By its release on 2022, added Kobbi Shahya, the versatile and prodigious Nepali musician, songwriter and producer. ‘Born in Kathmandu on 20 December 1999, Waters was only four when he moved to Germany with his parents. When the family relocated to Canada, he was 10. His father is a PhD in environmental science, and his mother has a degree in marketing and works in Geographical Information Systems. He has returned to Nepal only once, for his best friend’s coming of age ceremony at age 14. Those three months is Nepal would change the trajectory of his life.

Waters enjoyed his sightseeing trips to Culturate and Pokhara (parachute abseil), but remembers being stuck in Kathmandu with bad internet and unfamiliar way of life while his actual high-school teenage life was falling apart. He could not talk to his friends in Canada because of the time difference, and the long distance relationship with his girlfriend had ended with her cheating on him.

‘I was super bored, and I was also a little depressed,’ he recalled. ‘And I had a lot of time. So I started learning how to make music.’

He hasn’t stopped. The reason ‘Stunnin’ sounds like the work of a polished artist with a sleek producer, is because Waters spent all this teenage years training to be one — both as a song and a keen audience of pop-punk, pop and rap. Over the last few years, he has left digital trail of his music and life. His songs were written when he was a teenager, and they do not pretend to be anything else. The lyrics tell it like it is. ‘It’s like things/ I like girls/ I like the world/ I know the world is nuts,’ he sings in one. ‘It’s not so future about my future,’ he confesses in another.

Mystically, gone seems to matter less to Waters. His focus is clearly on catchy melodies filled with clever layers and beats while making it all sound simple, whole and natural. Stylistically, there are plenty of odds to his influences from all these years that he has been alive.

‘It is not surprising that currently 78% of his listening fan base is under 27 and about 87% are female. Nepalis now make up a part of his fast growing legion of followers. And as Nepalis discover him, Waters is himself trying to learn more about his Nepali roots.

‘Honestly speaking, because I was so young when I left Nepal, I missed out on a lot of my culture. But I am on this journey of connecting with my Nepal roots now, and I love it,’ he said.

Waters confesses to also being fairly disconnected from the new Nepali music scene, but he is certainly about his favorite (in Nepali) music: ‘I love Narayan Gopal, he is my favorite Nepali artist, and Jum Fadhil Mau is my favorite Narayan Gopal song. And Gaun Gaun Reta Utha is my favorite Nepali song.”

Sane, enough, he was recently holding court on Instagram Live when he spontaneously burst into the chorus of Ramesh Shrestha’s revolutionary Gau Gaun Reta Uttha as lots of people around the world cheered on him. “My song System, you know I wanted the audience to feel the rage, sort of like Gaun Gaun Reta Uttha,” he sobbed.

Waters is busy preparing the launch of his album in September. It was recorded in his college dorm at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. “Curtis produced and executed produced the entire album, with four collaborators in a few co-productions and features,” said Anokute.

‘Prockle’, the song that drew Anokute to Waters, will be released before the album. An older listener might find traces of the bright pop radio hits from about a decade ago, and he caught humming it below even more than that. And the sincere melancholic confession will certainly leave a lot for the younger audiences to relate to. ‘Prockle’ may well become inseparable on the radio and online this autumn, just as ‘Stunnin’ has fast become a part of the soundtrack to Summer 2020. Anokute was the first major music executives to reach out to Waters before any mainstream success. “Everybody loved Stunnin’ but Chris didn’t care about it. He loved the album,” Waters said of their initial conversations. “My life has really changed the last three months and everything has come together in a super surreal way.”

When Waters worked at Tropical Smoothie, a local smoothie shop in North Carolina, occasionally a student would recognize him from his nascent online presence. Anonymity is now a thing of the past.

“It’s pretty bazare. Every time I go out people come up to me. And I’m walking around with my family, and when I’m with my family I’m just Abhi. On the internet, it’s Curtis Waters. It’s sort of a character in my head,” he said, giddy and wary in equal measure. “Now kids come up, it’s a new thing, and am not used to it yet. I pote look good every time I’m outside now.”

He is the first Nepali born artist to reach international success of this kind, a feat that Waters, who yearns to understand and experience Nepal more than ever, is himself immensely proud of. But as a rising star with a serious international hit and a highly anticipated forthcoming album, this is primarily a glimpse of what’s coming his way.

‘He wrote the song, and I opened up doors for it to be heard and supported at major levels,’ Anokute said, of Stunnin’. ‘There’s no difference between how this feels compared to when we launched Katy Perry’s ‘I Kissed A Girl’. It’s just 12 years later, but the story always stays the same. His don’t lie. Stunnin’ is a TikTok sensation, but Curtis is more than a sensation. He’s born to stay.”

Kashish Das Shrestha is writing about pop and rock music since 2013. Twitter: @tiktoktrump
Sushma Barali in Rukum

On 25 May, six young men were killed in a mob attack and their bodies dumped into the river in the village of Soti in Rukum West.

The six were in a group of 17 friends that accompanied a young Dalit man, Nabaraj BK, for moral support as he tried to get a teenage girl from a “rathar” Thakuri caste to elope with him.

Of the attackers, 23 including Ward Chair Damber Shabadr Malla are in custody, the girl and her brother are in juvenile detention. The trial has been set for 26 July in Rukum District Court.

There have been protests by the families of the deceased, who fear that the accused will be set free or given a lenient sentence in what was essentially a caste-related crime.

Nepali Times reporter Sushma Barali spent a week in Soti and in Nabaraj BK’s hometown of in Jajarkot to meet the mothers, fathers, sisters and widows of those who were killed and who are now agitating for justice.

CASTE ASIDE

Stories of mothers, wives, and families of the six who were murdered in Rukum’s caste-based lynching

THE MOTHERS

Two years ago, returning home from the village of Thal of Jajarkot district in Nepal’s mid-western mountains, 19-year-old Laxmi Sunar’s husband died in a jeep crash. Her daughter was permanently disabled, and Laxmi became a single mother taking care of both and two other sons.

After the sole earning member of the family died, her eldest son Ram Sabahar Sunar decided to go to Malaysia to find work to augment the family income. The Sunar family was making ends meet with the money he sent home.

Her other son, Lokendra, 18, decided to accompany Nabaraj BK to the girl’s home in Soti on that fateful day. He was among the six who were killed, his body fished out of the river a few days later.

“Four days after finding Nabaraj’s body, they found my son’s body as well. But, I could not even recognize him,” Laxmi says, with a low, monotonous voice. “All the other bodies also had deep cuts with sickles, they had broken bones, and gaping wounds.”

Redhika Budhamagar also lost her teenage son, Ganesh. Budhamagar in the mob killings. Although not a Dalit himself, he had joined the group because he was Nabaraj’s friend and like him wanted to be a police officer.

The Budhamagar family subsists on farming, and has little extra income. That is why Ganesh’s elder brother is in India working as a driver and sends some money home. The family had pinned its hopes on Ganesh, a responsible and hardworking lad. A week before his death, he was working at a construction site to earn a little extra money for his family.

Redhika Budhamagar and other mothers believe that the post-mortem report have been falsified to show their sons drowned. She believes her son was injured by the police when it beat up Nabaraj’s group instead of the villagers who were attacking them.

Gobinda Shashi, 19, was another one-Dalit in the group who got caught up in a crime triggered by caste-based discrimination. After hearing that Nabaraj’s body had been found that night in the river, Gobinda’s mother Bimala Kuman was so worried she sent her eldest son, Sashan, down to the river to see if he could find his brother.

Gobinda’s body was found ten days later 30km downstream on the banks of the Bain. For all those days, Bina Kumari clung to a slim hope that somehow her son had escaped and was still alive.

“I thought he might have hid in the jungle, and I sent people to look everywhere,” Bina Kumari says, wiping her eyes. “But then they found his body. What did they get out of killing my son? I still cannot understand this.”

Sabiha BK had arranged a marriage for her 16-year-old son, Sanjib with a 15-year-old Sabina. Although child marriage is illegal, it is still practiced in a large part of Nepal, especially in the west. Sanjib and his wife were looking forward to celebrating his son’s fourth birthday.

“He had invited all his friends, and was planning to have a party. Now, he has left us,” says Sabina, whose son also wanted to become a police officer.

Sabiha’s pain is immeasurable, and her 20-year-old her daughter-in-law Sabina faints from time to time whenever someone mentions Sanjib’s name. Sabina now has to take responsibility for her granddaughter and daughter-in-law.

“She is still a child,” says Sabina about Sabina, “she has to wear a white sari at such a young age. I can barely sleep because I worry about how to take care of the baby and the others.”

On the day of the killings, Tikaram Shashi, 20, and his family had just returned from his in-law’s house. Tikaram had called his mother, Gita, to inform her that they were on the way home. However, he got a call from Nabaraj, that he was going to his girlfriend’s house in Soti. He joined the group midway, without going home. Gita Shashi got to see her son a few days later only after his death.

Tikaram wanted to make sure that his younger sister and daughter got a good education and could make something out of their lives. “I’ll open a shop so the family will have enough money, he would say. Now it is all a dream,” Gita says, weeping. “Only if the gallows are punished will my son’s soul rest in peace. But they are trying to let them go.”

Urmila BK was full of hope that her son Nabaraj would group up to a successful policeman. He was good looking, talented and a good sportsman. After her three daughters were married, it was Nabaraj’s turn. But Nabaraj’s parents were worried about his choice of bride – she was from the higher Thakuri caste.

They knew what that meant in a conservative society, and Nabaraj’s father even talked to the girl’s uncle. Instead, he was verbally abused for even informing them about his son’s friendship with their daughter.

Nabaraj was also his parent’s insurance policy for their old age, and their accrue is now tinged with worry about the future. Urmila says: “Not only did we lose our son, but our support system as well.”

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Grieving mothers of Nabaraj BK, Tikaram Shashi, Sanjib BK, and Laxmi Sunar.
of him Sanju was determined to make his son grow up to be a doctor. He borrowed money so that they could send him to a good education.

Sanju had boarded that Nahabari had been found dead, and it was mental torture for him to be at home of bodies being removed from the Lithi one by one. Sanju’s body was found five days later downstream.

Sanju’s father is still sick, and cannot work. His wife takes care of his family’s business, and does household chores. He was a clerk in a salaried government job. She is still looking for a job.

We had to see to make sure that we would support our son after we joined the police.” Umbra KC recalled, sobbing. “He died because he was in love. Our hearts cannot accept that he is dead. We wonder who will defend poor people like us. They killed our son and now we are killing justice.

The Police filed a case saying the crimes were based on caste violence, and they were in the district court in Rukum. Twenty-seven other villagers from Sati were also accused of murder, and have also reportedly confessed to the crime.

Nahabari’s family at home is still filled with the shreds and medals he had worn in school, district, and even national championships. The blue uniform he got as a NOC cadet is still hanging by a peg.

Nahabari met the girl at the Presidential Running Shoot Partnership ten years ago in Khotang of Rukum district. He was the star of the Rukum bagh family and became very popular with the crowd. After that, Nahabari and the girl became Facebook friends and dream of being life partners.

One day, Nahabari took the girl home with her young brother. His mother Umbra had no idea about the relationship. She thought I was my daughter’s friend, I only found out later,” she said.

Then she noticed the girl’s photograph was on her phone, and told her husband. The two were worried enough about the reputation of their family. They started asking their friends to relate to the crime. Records of the police reports and after interviewing survivors and family members, it turned out that the Nahabari KC gathered 17 friends from Rukum and went to the hospital to support as he waited to meet his love interest in Sati village across the Lithi River in Rukum West. Being from a ‘lower’ Dalit caste, the parents of the girl were against the relationship, and were trying to marry her to someone of their ‘Thakuri’ caste.

When they approached her house, the locals descended on the young men, chasing them down to the river, slapping them with sickles and stones, and after killing them they threw them into the river. Some jumped into the river to escape, but were killed on the spot.

Nahabari’s father and grandfather from MP of the area, Bhaumlal Singh Raikhy and Dalit activist Gopal Nepali.

By this time, the relationship was getting deeper and the girl’s parents were trying to marry her to someone of her caste. Nahabari then decided to play a role. For his part, they needed support, and gathered his friends to go to his house on 24 May. Sadhu Khadka, a former chair of the group of Nahabari’s supporters and friends. “We were surrounded on all four sides, even the police who we played football with started to attack us,” he remembered.

“All of us came with rocks, sticks, sickles and other weapons. We were attacking Nahabari”

Being outnumbered, many of the young men started running down the road with rocks and took care of them after he joined the police. Many of them were in school, equipped in sports, and were popular with friends. It was such a pathetic situation before joining police training, postponed because of the lockdown.

Nahabari had no help with an upper caste girl scared his mother, but now she was sure that there will be no justice for her son, and five other families.

Families of the victims say the police and autopsy reports of the bodies that were found in the Lithi had been tampered with.

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Suvena Pradhan Tuladhar

The government has now allowed public transport at half capacity, increasing concern over which type of masks are foolproof. Any mask will help in protection to some level, health experts say, but some masks are better than others. Metro-Mask has stopped making its masks designed to stop dust particles, and now focuses solely on producing high-tech industrial masks like N95 and KN95.

Earlier pollution protection masks had valves to allow wearers to exhale more easily. These are not recommended for coronavirus because although they protect the wearer, the masks put others around them at risk.

Experts also say that surgical masks are better at protection from the virus than a cloth mask. So, while fashionable masks are a quirky accessory, buyers may want to reconsider if the cloth mask is worth the cost, when a simple surgical mask would do a better job.

Cotton Mill Nepal was producing high-end household linen items, now offers family packs of colourful masks in three sizes. They can be ordered online through daru.com.

Similarly, Kokuma which makes baby clothing and accessories for export and the home market, is now also making cloth masks. Although the WHO does not say babies need to wear masks, some parents do not want to take risks. Kokuma employs seamstresses who work from home, and besides baby items they can also turn out customised banded masks.

Another social entrepreneurship company, Sabah Nepal, which has a network of 3,000 home-based women members all over the country to develop craft and food-based products, has been contracted by UNDP Nepal to make 60,000 cloth masks. The arrangement provides income for the women as well as produce protective item that is in short supply.

Meanwhile, Hemp Nepal, which turns fabric from the hemp plant into clothing items, cushion covers and even shoes, is also turning its attention to making masks. The one that stands out for its colourful range of designer masks is Groomin. With its motto ‘Style and safety’, Groomin offers ladies’ face coverings that are elegant while at the same time having three layers of filters with adjustable ear loops. A 3-pack costs Rs1,000.

At Metro-Mask Tashi Gyaleen Sherva seems to be preparing to meet this growth in demand for both simple as well as fancier masks. He says: “We are slowly going to transition into making cooler looking high-tech masks.”

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