Nepal’s social media erupted in outrage this week as news emerged that the Cabinet had not taken a decision to endorse an extension of Kulman Ghising as head of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), but the senior party leader Bambdev Gautam was nominated to the Upper House.

Ghising is wildly popular in the Nepali public sphere because he is credited with ending daily power cuts after he took over the NEA in 2016. To do this, he had to tread on a lot of powerful toes, including big businesses with political patronage.

Even though the Ministry of Energy officials publicly announced they had forwarded the endorsement for Ghising’s extension by four more years to the Cabinet, Prime Minister Oli is said to have opposed it because he felt Ghising was getting all the credit for ending load-shedding.

However, Ghising always made it a point to thank his team at NEA and the ministry for reducing power leakage, insuring electricity import from India, and for turning the loss-making power utility into profit.

Ghising was putting pressure on industrialists who benefited from 24-hour power to pay past electricity arrears, and they in turn wanted the prime minister to have Ghising removed.

Oli’s aides have passed disparaging remarks about Ghising in public, and a social media smear campaign accuses him of paying kickbacks to politicians.

Another factor that could have turned Oli against the extension is that his main party rival Pushpa Kamal Dahal is backing Ghising because he fears refusing an extension would hurt the party. Although Oli and Dahal have buried the hatchet for now, there is still bad blood between them.

Ghising has been urged by many to get into politics. Ghising would be a formidable opponent, whichever party he joined, and this could be why some politicians are wary of him.

What has been glaring this week is Prime Minister Oli’s reluctance to reinstate Ghising, while Bambdev Gautam who lost the 2017 election from Bardia, has been elevated to the Upper House to pave the way for a ministerial berth.

Also this week, Prime Minister Oli has brought Yubaraj Khatiwada as his economic adviser after he had to step down as finance minister.
Twenty years ago in the week 20-26 September 2000, Nepal used to suffer frequent political lockdowns called ‘bandhs’ enforced by opposition political parties. Hemlata Rai’s story, of these shutdowns on the economy.

Ben Roberts

GLACIAL RETREAT

While global warming and glacial retreat is an unavoidable disaster for the world it is encouraging to note that the newly exposed moraines and glacial valleys are able to regenerate in the form of new forests and guess ultimately food producing.

Inside story of Nepal’s Rana dynasty by Koushik De

Koushik De

Nepal Times @NepaliTimes

This nostalgic look back at Boris Lissanevitch, father of Nepal’s tourism now has to re-start from zero, its endorsement of tourism now has to be against Ghising’s extension to the NEA.

For new tourism activities.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Fluctuations in Himalayan glaciers, concluding that snowfall in darkness for a decade. The protest is also aimed at corruption, price hike, justice, arrangement of employment for freed kamaiyas, termination of the 1950 treaty between Nepal and India. The protest is also aimed at corruption, price hike, justice, arrangement of employment for freed kamaiyas, termination of the 1950 treaty between Nepal and India. The protest is also aimed at corruption, price hike, justice, arrangement of employment for freed kamaiyas, termination of the 1950 treaty between Nepal and India.

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Uma Bhujel in and out of prison
The war is long over, but this ex-guerrilla is still breaking out of jail

Tufan Neupane

Most-guerrilla Uma Bhujel has spent her entire revolutionary life in and out of jail. During the war, she was captured, made a jail break, was recaptured, and escaped again. After the ceasefire in 2006, she was nominated to the Constituent Assembly and joined the YCL. But since then, as a semi-underground member of the Bilav faction of Maoists, she has again been in and out of jail 12 times in eight months, accused of being in possession of weapons.

After being shunted around the country on court summons, she appealed to the Supreme Court which ordered her release on 30 August. But as soon as she was released from detention in Sunsari, she gave police the slip and has vanished again.

All this would have been farcical enough. But what even more ironical is that she is being released by the judicial system of a state that she has taken up arms against, and is being detained by a police force under direct command of Ram Bahadur Thapa, her former Maoist comrade who is now Home Minister.

Since December, Uma Bhujel has been arrested, released, re-arrested, relocated and presented before multiple district courts.

“After filing and losing all their cases, the Nepal Police has no charges left against Uma Bhujel,” says her lawyer Ekraj Bhandari, who is now using civil police for harassment of his client.

One of the Supreme Court’s IN THE FRONTLINES: Uma Bhujel (centre, above) as a Brigade Commissar with comrades. She is an author in Nepal’s 1999 Fast Kill three element. (Photo looking at her photograph in the book ‘A People War in 2010’). night.
core values is to uphold the independence of Nepal’s judiciary so that it can perform its duties without political interference and preserve the principles of democracy, multi-party and an open society.

Initially, Bhujel was charged with organising explosions, possession of arms and ammunition, crimes against the state, and high treason. The Communist Party of Nepal Maoist (as opposed to the ruling Nepal Communist Party which is an alliance of the former UML and the Maoist party) went underground after being banned.

After police arrested her in December last year in Sunsari, she was detained for 25 days. Tried in court on a weapons charge, she was ordered released on bail. But just as she paid her bail, police re-arrested her and handed her over to Bajpa police.

She was detained in Baqua for 22 days, and on the 14 February she was released on bail for Rs150,000. Again, as her lawyer paid the bail she was taken in and driven to Dhanusha where the court ordered her release on a bail of Rs30,000, but she was re-arrested and taken this time all the way to Kalali in western Nepal on 31 May in the middle of a pandemic.

There, the court declared her innocent and ordered her release. Police then brought her to Gorkha where the district court again said on 2 June that she should be freed.

But police once more dragged her to the Lalitpur District Court where she was again ordered to be released.

In a pattern that had by then become familiar, she was rearrested, tortured, and eventually released again and presented at the Kathmandu District Court which again ordered her release. But as soon as she was released, she was re-arrested.

On 30 August Uma Bhujel was finally ordered to be released from her jail cell in Sunsari. However, as she was being taken out she escaped, and has been underground since.

All this is nothing new for Bhujel. During the war, she was captured in 1998 in Tandrang of Gorkha, and was in jail for one year where she was tortured. She made a jail break and was captured again.

She has written about her dramatic jail break in the book ‘Historical Gorkha Jailbreak’. There have been documentaries and features films made about her life.
Caught on camera: Nepal’s rare fishing cat
Recent camera trap images confirm the existence of this endangered feline

Swechhya Shrestha in Kapilvastu

Fishing cats’ nature to hunt in water sets it apart from other land-dwelling felines. It has water resistant fur and webbed feet to help with swimming and fishing. It is also about twice the size of domestic cats with head to body length ranging from 57 to 78cm and tail, which is 20 to 30cm long.

Based on its shape, size and diet and its inability to roar, fishing cat is classified into the group of small cats. But of the 12 species of wild cats found in Nepal, only five (Royal Bengal Tiger, Snow Leopard, Clouded Leopard, Lynx and Leopard Cat) are included in the protected species list under the National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act 1973. Nepal has however, categorised it as endangered but there has been no conservation efforts. It is important to raise community awareness about the ecological importance of this animal, especially now that the sightings have been made.

Children in local schools should be taught about them and interested locals should be encouraged to work on their conservation.

This year’s study was supported by the Rufford Foundation and the Small Mammals Conservation and Research Foundation.

Swechhya Shrestha is a graduate research assistant at the Small Mammals Conservation and Research Foundation (SMCRF) in Kathmandu.
Standing up to be counted next year

The country’s first federal-era national census in 2021 will coincide with the Covid-19 crisis

Chetan Adhikari

N epal’s first federal-era census, slated for mid-2021, promises to usher in a new age of data analytics for national development through its revamped methods, techniques and approach. Under the slogan ‘My Census, My Participation’, the National Population and Household Census 2021 will provide the blueprint for the work in the coming decade for all three tiers of government.

The government hopes that the new census data will ease the transition into the federal system with a much more accurate data base that will go beyond just a headcount but also show if and how it is interpreted. Resources allocation by these three tiers of government will be dependent on data from the census, and how it is interpreted.

Even by early next year, the impact of the Covid-19 crisis will still be present when enumerators fan out across the country for the once-in-a-decade exercise. Planners from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) and National Planning Commission (NPC) have said that they will be using state of the art information technology for the census. Plans for a ‘virtual census’ have been set in case the pandemic continues to be a threat into next year.

At present the census is set for 9 May to 22 June, 2021, and will be divided into two phases. The preliminary phase from 9 to 28 May will consist of supervisors filling listing forms for numbers of family members per household. The second phase, from 8-22 June, will see the central questionnaires for demographic and financial data being used.

The census will replace outdated pre-federalism data which are not in line with the new government structure. Local governments and agencies have been designated based on the 2011 data, which are mostly outdated and inaccurate. Nepal’s population will have expanded from 26.6 million in that census to more than 30 million by now.

Pre-federalism Nepal was divided into five development zones and 261 constituencies. During the first general elections under the federal constitution in 2017, there were seven provinces and 145 constituencies, the nearly 3,915 VDCs were replaced with 201 urban and 460 rural municipalities.

To better suit the federalism model, ward-level and community-level questionnaires are being used for the first time. This will allow authorities to address issues such as women, child and dalit rights, social security and residence particular to each community.

With its new community-centric approach, the census will bridge the gap between local, provincial and federal government so that specific plans can be made to address them.

Changes to the questionnaire have been introduced to diversify the data gathered. 25 questionnaires are registered in the first phase of the census while there are 55 in the second. A community set of 100 questionnaires is a newer addition, and data from it is received from ward offices and filled by supervisors themselves.

‘Families access to banks and financial institutions and weight of loans and debt will be incorporates in the new census. Questions regarding occupational training and vocational education within a family are also new additions as the census aims to identify skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manpower present in the community.

New questions to gather data on a family’s means of feeding themselves and household provisions have also been set. Houses built on government grants will be identified in the new census.

A new ‘modified do june’ method has been introduced to reduce inaccuracies in counting the population. A person could previously be counted from both their site of residence and their site of employment. To avoid redundancies, an individual will now either be counted from the site they are most active in or the site they prefer to be counted from. Those with no fixed residences, such as asylum seekers or homeless will be counted on the final day of the census from the places they are located.

While the pilot census of June 2020 was affected by the pandemic and lockdown, planners remain confident of conducting next year’s census on time. Preparatory work has already begun on questionnaire design, census mapping, publicity and communication and training of supervisors are all underway for 50,000 enumerators who have been mobilised across the country in preparation.

Nepal’s census has its origins in wartime. The first four censuses were held in 1911 to 1941, before or during the World Wars, when Nepal’s Rana rulers who had promised soldiers for the British Army needed to know the numbers of young men from specific ethnic groups who could be mobilised.

The country’s first census using non-military and modern methods was conducted in 1951, and has been held every ten years after that. The first computer arrived in Nepal during the 1971 census, a second generation IBM-1401 that used tape drives for storage and punch cards for data entry.

The 1981 census was conducted in a state-of-the-art British-made ICL 2950 with one megabyte of RAM and a 640 MB hard drive in addition to 800 gigabytes of storage drives, which came in four units. That may seem like nothing these days, but it did what it was supposed to do in its day.

The number of internet users in Nepal is expected to reach 30 million by next year.

Worldlink

Worldlink is on issuer shares to the public within three years to expand its internet services through domestic investments, said chairman Dipi Pargyal at a virtual

program held on 15 September to mark the insurer’s 25th anniversary. He said Worldlink was setting up its own server in the country to speed up the net. The number of internet users in Nepal has increased by 50% since COVID-19 lockdown. (Chairman of the National Innovation Center Mahabir Pun said his organization was pushing internet in Nepal.

Samsung Basain offer

Samsung Basain offer on the 26th anniversary of offer for the Samsung offer on Samsung Neo phone with discounts of up to 35% on its wide

range of television and home appliances, TVs, Refrigerators and Washing Machines. The term will be here for two years and warranty are available from Samsung India website at http://www.samsung.com.

Qatar Airways

Qatar Airways began operating three weekly flights to and from Kathmandu from 5 September. All arriving passengers to Nepal must have negative PCR results for tests conducted within 72 hours of their scheduled flight time, and must have

completed an online entry form. Qatar also issued on-board COVID-19 safety precautions, which include PPE for cabin crew and a complementary protective kit and face shields for passengers. Hamad International Airport in Doha has stringent hygiene protocols and applies social distancing measures throughout its premises.

Hyundai Aura

Hyundai Aura S with a more effective and comfortable design, improved fuel efficiency, and an advanced safety system. The Hyundai Aura S will be available in Nepal in Navy Blue, Titan Grey,

Qappao Dual V8 Petrol engine features a more-refined and comfortable design, improved fuel efficiency, and an advanced safety system. The Hyundai Aura S will be available in Nepal in Navy Blue, Titan Grey,

TigoPhone Silver, and Polar White Rs.33, 59. 59.

Sunrise Green Pin

Sunrise Bank has launched a Green Pin service in a bid to make all its debit cards, credit card and international card transactions more secure and convenient, with customers expected to save Rs 600 on bank-issued cards. Customers will receive a Green Pin on a SMS in their registered phone numbers as soon as they use their PIN card at any ATM service.

City Express TikiTok

City Express Money Frontier, the main sponsor of Prakash Sapul’s widely popular Garland, has organised the City Express Garlands TikiTok challenge for TikTok users at home and abroad. The

first, second and third best videos among participants of the challenge will be awarded cash prize. Participants must post their videos on TikTok by 30 September, while results will be published on 6 October.
Lockdown Town

EVENTS

Sunday Sessions
This week, songwriter and music producer Jemima Rall will join journalist Priyanka Thakuri in a discussion about her journey in music. Tune in to the livestream on Facebook. Get additional information at the Quartzer’s Cafe Facebook page.

Virtual Education Symposium
The British Council Nepal is set to host its 48th Education Symposium, which will bring together policymakers, planners, administrators, head teachers, teachers, researchers, NGOs, and private sector and development partners to discuss issues around the gender & school leadership, its principles and practices in Nepal. 23-27 September

Online Archives
Revisitation History
In Revisitation History, the New Yorker’s Malcolm Gladwell re-examines and misunderstands elements from events, people, ideas, and even songs of the past. Find the podcast on Stitcher and Apple Podcast.

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

DINING

Le Sherpa Farmers Market
Le Sherpa weekly farmers market resumes this week. Shop for fresh and organic vegetables, fruit, cheese, bread, meat products, honey, and much more. Go to Le Sherpa Farmer's Market's Facebook page to learn about physical distancing measures and rules while shopping. Saturday, 6am - 12.30pm, Le Sherpa Maharajgunj

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Razzle Dazzle
Enjoy the end-of-summer afternoons with fresh ice cream from Gelato. Browse the menu at Foodmandu to get ice cream from the classic chocolate sauce to the charcoal gelato and every flavour in between.

Gelato
Enjoy the end-of-summer afternoons with fresh ice cream from Gelato. Browse the menu at Foodmandu to get ice cream from the classic chocolate sauce to the charcoal gelato and every flavour in between.

Tasneem’s Kings Kitchen
Order Tasneem’s mouth-watering biryani, or prescribe through the menu for your fill of mouth-watering, spicy and luxurious dishes. Order from Foodmandu.

Dining

The Village Cafe
Get fresh, delicious, home-made Newa cuisine from The Village Cafe. Order the set menu, non veg, momos and laluka. Look at the menu on Foodmandu or Facebook. (01) 5049712 / 8440401521

Frescoo Cafe
Look no further than Frescoo Cafe for the menu on Foodmandu.

DANCE CLASS
If you’re looking at taking up new interests, pit bulletin paper, Bharatnatyam, or contemporary dance classes at Jasho Art Academy. Call the academy for details.

#HOrjourny
The second guest of Gals in Tech Nepal’s #HOrJourney series will feature Gunakeshari Pradhan Mannaorth, former Director of Nepal Telecom and Nepal’s first female computer engineer. She is a current president of non-profit Women in Information Technology, which aims to help and support women in technical fields. Register for the event at https://bit.ly/3jXnenO. 19th September 7pm - 7pm

Amazing Libraries
Take a virtual trip to 15 historic and beautiful libraries around the world through the Amazing Libraries Google Earth tour, including the New York Public Library, Kiemnemud in the Czech Republic, Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt.

Katha Ghera
Some of Katha Ghera’s plays are now on YouTube: Watch Night, Mother, and Dayal V allay, the Nepali interpretation of The Giong Tree.

Storytime from space
Perfect for young kids with an interest in astronomy and space exploration, the Storytime from Space series features astronauts on the International Space Station reading children’s literature. Find the playlist and watch with children at: https://storytimefromspace.com/Abby

ECOLOGIC WITH MISS MOTI
Kripa Joshi
Nepal’s one of the leading environmentalists, Kripa Joshi is a key leader in Nepal’s efforts to preserve the country’s biodiversity. An ardent campaigner for environmental education, Kripa is a powerhouse in the field of environmental conservation in Nepal. She is currently a computer engineer. Her #HerJourney series will feature Gunakeshari Pradhan Mannaorth, former Director of Nepal Telecom and Nepal’s first female computer engineer. She is a current president of non-profit Women in Information Technology, which aims to help and support women in technical fields. Register for the event at https://bit.ly/3jXnenO. 19th September 7pm - 7pm

Our Pick
Aldrich deals with an accusation that his 14-year-old son is a murderer in Apple TV+ crime drama The Line of Duty. Based on the 2013 novel of the same name by William Laidlaw, Oisín Brouder portrays Aidy Balder, a former district attorney investigating the murder of a schoolgirl in the coastal town of Aldrich. Oisín plays the role of Detective Inspector Frankie Spencer.

Thirsty? We recommend enjoying some fresh and organic juices from Le Sherpa Maharajgunj.
Take to pottery during the pandemic

Ceramics classes allow Bhaktapur potters to keep family heritage alive, while giving people a chance to de-stress

Monika Deupala

As Nepal’s lockdown goes into its seventh month, albeit relaxing, people are taking up new indoor hobbies and finding ways to do more creative and calming activities. One of them is taking up ceramics.

And while she discovered one’s talent for the craft than in Bhaktapur, the centre of traditional pottery in Kathmandu Valley. The craft demands patience and concentration as a lump of clay is moulded on the potter’s wheel, fired and then turned into a work of art. Archana Panthi, 25, a theatre artist from Kathmandu used to buy ceramic gifts for friends, but decided to use the lockdown to learn pottery herself. She enrolled in Cera Nepal when the lockdown was eased, and the experience was so positive that she is determined to go back now with her whole family.

The owner gave us instructions, and we moulded the clay with our palms and fingers, taught me to be more patient and concentrated on creating something, it is good therapy to be focused on what you want to do”, says Ratna Prasad Prajapati, 47, who has returned to the family’s pottery business with new ideas and innovation.

Pottery making has often been described as being therapeutic. The mind is focused on what one wants to create, and it needs concentration and delicate work. Alina Prajapati says there have been many troubled adolescents who have found it to be useful to relax mind and body. Subekchya KC, 35 was on her maternity break before lockdown and joined the pottery lessons at Cera Nepal, bringing along her older four-year-old son. She says, “It was a break for me, I forget all my stress while making a bowl or ceramic plate. And my son found it lots of fun too. I completely forgot about postpartum angst, it was a real stress buster for me.”

“Making something out of nothing was a great experience, it also allowed me to bond better with my son and we enjoyed shaping the clay together,” Sharma says.

Both Ratna and Alina Prajapati have restarted the ceramics classes with partial lifting of the lockdown. They see it as their responsibility to society to keep their family heritage alive, while giving people a chance to de-stress during the Covid-19 crisis.
By Jimmy Roberts

In 1997, the Himalayan Odyssey of a blog he wrote in 1997 called Mountain Travel Nepal. Nepal Times brings you parts of a blog he wrote in 1997 called "The Himalayan Odyssey" on the Mountain Travel Nepal website just before he died on 1 November 1997 in Pokhara.

I came out to India and joined the Indian Army at the end of 1941. I joined the army partly because I was as qualified for any more intellectual employment, but mainly because I wanted to climb in the Himalayas. I had been able to climb on some of the higher peaks in the Alps and I felt I had a number of good cards and if I did not always play them properly, that was unimportant.

At that time the whole of the Himalayan Karakoram may even look like a vast and fascinating book. But until about 1948, visits to Kathmandu were invariably to visit the Rana rulers or the British Embassies installed by them. Kathmandu itself was firmly closed to foreigners. Now it is strange to think that there ever was a time when Kathmandu offered a greater fascination than Lhasa and was certainly less known. Fourteen years were to pass before I set foot in Nepal myself and this long wait, and the magical pictures conjured up during the waiting years, must account for the fact that ever since then I have never quite lost my own sense of wonder and privilege of being allowed inside at all.

I try to remember that others may have a different attitude, but even so I feel my face beginning to flush when people argue that they should all be allowed to enter certain border regions, restricted by the government of their country?

Until the war began at the end of 1939, possibly three of four expeditions came from Europe or America each year. In the early 1940s we were restricted to two or three months local leave each year, and nine months leave every three years. Annual leave was privilege and not a right and could be withheld or reduced by one’s commanding officer.

A new expedition to climb Everest was being organised for the fall of 1940, and following Masherbrum. I was asked to join. Initially it was a team expedition, but a whole lifetime of mountain climbing and exploration went wrong. Even if and when the highest places were to be denied to me, I have no regrets. Fate dealt me a bad hand and the members. It was an alluring prospect: just the right age and, in the early 1940s, the strongest and fittest. It was an attraction, perhaps, for more than one Sherpa to Pokhara and entered the Manang Bhot and Bhima Takkot valleys and collecting loads. However, I was glad to go myself, only as a sort of poor team. Success was however by no means certain and I know that in the event of failure there would be another attempt after the monsoon. It seemed reasonable to suppose that some members might be killed, frostbitten or at least become tired and that replacements would be needed in the fall.

By dumping my oxygen loads at Base Camp I went off to prove myself, made the first exploration of the Lhundung, Tsho and Hongsu valleys, the first ascent of Mera and a south-to-north crossing of Annapurna Pass. But apart from Nepal, the remainder of the Himalayan Range from Bhutan to Kashmir, remained firmly closed to foreign expeditions. Nepal closed her own mountain for three years from 1966 to 1968 in sympathy with trans-Himalayan tensions prevailing at the time.

The years from 1950 to 1965 were the golden age of climbing and exploration in Nepal. Permit were of course required, but there were no restrictions, as before 1965, on particular peaks, which might or might not be attempted. Most of the highest peaks were climbed during these years but there yet were never too many expeditions in the field at one time.

Generally speaking, the expeditions were not too large and publicity and ballyhoo remained at a low level. After 1960 the flood gates opened, although the Japanese expeditions devoured Nepal mountain training for a time to the status of a football league. In 1967, the doors of India and Pakistan were opened once again (mainly for economic reasons) and we now have a situation, not so different to that which used to obtain in the early days, plus the bonus of Nepal. However, the permit system is now far stricter and more complicated.

After 1953 I continued to return to Nepal from the French Commando in Malaya almost yearly, to the detriment of my military career. In 1954 I climbed Putha Hiunchuli (23,800 feet) with one Sherpa and this remains my longest personal height record.

Machapuchare followed in 1957, Noyce and Cox reaching a point about 50 meters below the north summit in the latter year. In 1966 Annapurna II was the last 26,000 footer to fall, Grant, Grigson and Ang Nima being the summit trio. In 1965 and 1963 I scrambled around the flanks of Dhaulagiri VI, like Machapuchare, ‘D4’ was an old ambition but proved even more difficult to grasp than the proverbial fish Tail. Meanwhile, in 1958, fate dealt me one more card, an ace this time, and this gave me the opportunity gradually to switch the theme of my story from expeditionary mountaineering to trekking and the origins of Mountain Travel.

Towards the end of 1958 I was appointed to the newly created post of Military Attaché to the British Embassy in Kathmandu, and I have lived in Nepal ever since. In those days the Embassy staff was very small and so, at first, it was perhaps rather more difficult to get away than it had been before. However from now on I was at the centre of the Nepal–French mountain scene, and the 1960 expedition to Annapurna added a new dimension to the period. The appointment for was for three years and rather weakly I managed to have this extended by another two, by ‘luck’ as a soldier had already decided to retire from the army and to devote myself full time to mountains.

Now I was merely opting for another two years of security and good pay. But while I was interred and this time dealt me a joker in the shape of a longitaire to the British Embassy in Kathmandu, and I have lived in Nepal ever since. In those days the Embassy staff was very small and so, at first, it was perhaps rather more difficult to get away than it had been before. However from now on I was at the centre of the Nepal–French mountain scene, and the 1960 expedition to Annapurna added a new dimension to the period. The appointment for was for three years and rather weakly I managed to have this extended by another two, by ‘luck’ as a soldier had already decided to retire from the army and to devote myself full time to mountains.

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The expedition was if anything strengthened by the departure of the dissidents (three of whom were in any case probably somewhat too elderly for very high altitude work) only to be decimated by an outbreak of apparently infectious fever. Despite all this, I did not too badly and my main regret was the loss of a childish and innocent reality.

At this stage I should mention that some in 1964 I think. The terms trek and trekking etc, which are now very commonly used and understood but were never used in 1963, have spread to the rest of the world. Since handled.

The year 1966, when Mountain Travel started to give fair treatment to Sherpas, also marked the end of mounting expeditionary activity for three years. Kumbu was already suffering from the economic effects of the near closure of the once profitable trade with Tibet, and this new source of employment, then and swelling steadily in coming years, was a godsend to Sherpa families.

Now it is all taken for granted and tends to rate less honourably than the aid (hospitals, schools and bridges) given to the Sherpa community by an outside source. However, someone had to start it all - and what trekking gave the earlier years has not been forgotten in the villages, which lies at the foot of Mt Everest

What of the future? The growth of do-it-yourself trekkers. One cannot provide for no less than 8 trekkers as we are trying to show in Mountain Travel.

There was, too, the question of approach, of what we were trying to achieve, in aim and selection of the way a trek was conducted. Shortly stated, I would say we are trying to show you the mountains of Nepal, its valleys and villages, and people, under the best possible conditions, but without shielding you from reality.

One hears criticism of groups who trek through Nepal isolated from the people and country by their own entourage and disinterest. That is not, I hope, our way of running a trek. Rather we try and give you all the ingredients of satisfaction that it would be possible, to enjoy an expeditionary type holiday in the Himalayas.

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Some schools re-open in remote rural Nepal

Teachers and parents see no sense keeping schools closed when there is little or no Covid-19 spread

Alisha Sijapati

I have been six months since students and teachers all over Nepal have not had classes, but schools in remote rural Nepal with few or no Covid-19 cases are beginning to re-open.

Rural municipalities have decided to resume school with an ‘alternative education model’ from 17 September, the day the government also allowed long-distance buses and further relaxation of lockdown rules in some districts.

Upper Mustang’s Lo-Gekar Rural Municipality resumed classes on Thursday since there have been no Covid-19 cases reported in this trans-Himalayan region of Nepal. I think we have had enough of this closure, we need life to get back to normal, and especially the children need to be back in classes,” said Lo-Gekar municipality chair Raju Bista.

Children in Upper Mustang have long winter breaks due to severe winters, so if the school had remained closed for another month, most children would have lost a full year of classes.

However, the biggest hurdle at the moment for schools all over Mustang district is the massive landslide at Rupse which has blocked the Kali Gandaki Highway for the past two months. It is not likely to be opened soon. This means will take time for students and teachers who had gone away to return.

But that has not deterred Wangdu Lama, principal of the Ghami Solar School to start classes for students who have remained behind. The school has 65 boarders from surrounding villages, and Lama says adequate precautions are being taken to ensure distancing and mask-wearing.

‘Schools are where children are supposed to be,’ says Lama. ‘We used to have four children per bench, now we will have only two. Classes will last from nine to four, and we will teach only three subjects English, Maths and Science for now because the other teachers are away.’

Across the Thorong La pass in Manang, classes also resumed on 17 September. The remote district has had only four Covid-19 cases, and all have recovered. At this time, the scenic valley would have been preparing for the autumn trekking season, but the trails have been empty for most of 2020.

‘We had to call guardians to tell them classes are resuming, and that we will be taking all precautions about the virus,’ said Lokendra Ghale, chair of Chame Rural Municipality.

In western Nepal’s Achham district, a joint meeting of school officials and health care workers of the remote Mellekh Rural Municipality decided that it would be safe to re-open schools with proper preventive measures even though the town had 138 Covid-19 cases, initially brought by returning workers from India.

“We have not had any new cases now for 28 days, so we decided it was safe to partially re-open schools from next week with just one grade per day,” explained Municipality Chair Lok Lahadur Bohara. “We have to compensate for all the months of classes that students here have lost.”

Mellekh alone has 43 schools scattered across the mountains, and officials there have kept a close tab on the number of new cases and developed an effective contact tracing and home isolation strategy.

Even in areas with higher Covid-19 caseloads like Baglung district, some schools are re-opening. The Wadigad Rural Municipality is taking the government’s directive of developing an alternative education model with an uncommon approach community learning.

Some schools re-open in remote rural Nepal

“A school in Dhading performed a ‘dress rehearsal’ to resume classes adhering to Covid-19 protocols.”

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