As Nepal plunges headlong into the second wave of Covid-19, the new surge is infecting more young people and children than before, and making them sicker. This has raised fears that the more virulent and sometimes deadly UK variant B.1.1.7 is now spreading in the community.

Despite this, Nepal’s holiday season has been relatively calm so far this year. Most people have avoided travel to tourist spots, and authorities have imposed restrictions on gatherings and events.

The government has advised people to continue wearing masks and maintaining social distancing. However, many people have ignored these guidelines, particularly in the Kathmandu Valley, where the infection rate has been high.

“Covid-19 has changed from an old man’s disease to a child’s disease,” said Dr. Bikash Pokharel, a pediatrician at the Kathmandu Medical College.

The government has also announced a lockdown in Kathmandu Valley, Bagmati, and Sindhuli districts from April 26 to May 3.

Meanwhile, the vaccine drive has been ongoing, with nearly 2 million doses administered so far. However, many people are still hesitant to get vaccinated, citing concerns about side effects and the safety of the vaccine.

Preparing for a ‘No Normal’

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Preparing for ‘No Normal’

When the Nepali government clamped down on smokeless tobacco after the second case was detected last year in a student travelling back from France, everyone thought it would be weeks, if not months. But it is now two days of the smoky open border between Khasi and a Nepal border post. The border迪ends have been closed for two days, a week after a student was detected in a student returning from France. We have been waiting for the second wave to start spreading in the community.

The virus has spread from India to Nepal, and it has been a real challenge to control it. The government is working hard to prevent the virus from spreading in the community. The new cases are being reported daily, and the government is doing its best to control the spread of the virus.

Public health specialists warn that this background could be dire in India. The reasons for this new outbreak are unknown, and there is no vaccine available yet. The government is doing its best to control the spread of the virus.

Health experts say that it is important to continue with the following measures:

1. Wear masks in public places.
2. Maintain social distancing.
3. Wash hands frequently.
4. Avoid large gatherings.
5. Get vaccinated if eligible.

The government is working hard to control the spread of the virus. They are doing their best to prevent the virus from spreading in the community.

Most commented

Nepal’s 1st hydroelectric plant is a source of energy for all.

Nepal’s 1st hydroelectric plant is a source of energy for all.

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TIME TO MEET AGAIN: SAN FRANCISCO

Have a healthy journey with all precautions taken down to the smallest detail for your in-flight safety.
The homecoming of Nepal’s governor

Althingi Sijapati

Nearly 40 years after it was stolen from Patan, a stone statue of Laxmi-Narayan finally landed at Kathmandu airport on 13 April, raising hopes that thousands of other religious objects from Nepal will also come home.

The 800-year-old undamaged idol was washed out of its shrine in July 1984 from Patan’s Patik Tole where it was being worshipped till the day it was stolen. The figure surfaced briefly in 1990 at a British auction, disappeared again, and was last seen at the Dallas Museum of Art where it was an "exhibit" since 2007.

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) handed over the statue to the Nepal Embassy in Washington on 6 March, and it took some time for the documents to be processed before the god could finally be returned to Nepal.

"The statues were handed over to the Patan Museum, and we are preparing all the needed logistics here before it can be restored to its original temple," says Damodar Gajurel, Director-General of the Department of Archaeology.

Locals had made a replica of the statue that they worshipped after the original was stolen. Other religious objects that have been returned to Nepal have also been sent to the Patan Museum, for safekeeping so it will not be stolen again.

"This process for the deity to be restored to its original space is lengthy. Community members have to reach out to the District Office in Lalitpur for paperwork for security purposes. While the bureaucratic wheels grind on, priests at Patik Tole are义务reseising to eat an auspicious date for the special puja to reinstatement of the idol.

"When we bring back our god, there will be celebrations and a procession so the whole world knows and understands that lives from our living heritage is not to be stored and exhibited in their museums or private collections," says Chitrabhu Maharjan, Mayor of Lalitpur Metropolitan City.

Although overlooked by the Laxmi-Narayan homecoming, community members are in a dilemma about what to do with the replicas they have been worshipping since 1993.

Dilendra Shrestha, a board member of Patan Museum and himself from Patik Tole, says, "Even if it’s a replica, it is still our god, and we will make arrangements to house both our gods."

Shrestha says that for cultural and religious reasons, the original Laxmi-Narayan may not be kept as the central god anymore, as one of its bands was broken during transportation across the country.

Gods that are damaged cannot be kept as the central idol in the temple even though they are worshipped, according to local belief.

"Most likely both the original and replica will keep their own temples, however, the decision will be a collective one from the community," Shrestha says.

A photograph of the 15th-century deity was first published in Images of Nepal, a 1984 book, by Indian historian Krishna Dwa. Later, it was included by Nepal’s art historian Lain Singh Bangdel in his book Stolen Smiles of Nepal. The collective effort of bringing Laxmi-Narayan home has set a significant precedent in repatriating stolen god of Nepal, and has been a collective effort of historians, academics, activists, investigation agencies and the government of Nepal and the United States.

American artist Loyce Davis who has documented stolen religious objects through her art is glad the Laxmi-Narayan is back to where it belongs. She had painted the Patik abscess with the missing deity depicted in gold.

"The day the Laxmi Narayan arrives in Nepal, I will be the happiest person—so many people and organizations have worked on this. The only way to protect them is to increase awareness about their significance. We have a lot of work to do," Davis told this paper earlier this year.

Indeed, an investigation by the Nepal Times tracked another deity

Biodegradable plastic in Nepal

A Nepali company has tried to address the growing problem of plastic pollution in Nepal by manufacturing biodegradable plastic products. The government has already banned single-use plastic, and the throwaway items have clogged streams and rivers across the country. Many of these items take more than 50 years to decompose in dumping sites.

Now, New Kathmandu-based Trading Concern is now producing biodegradable plastic items within three months of disposal. Although this does not reduce the use of plastic, it is a first step in reducing the amount of garbage on all kinds of plastic bags, cups, and other items.

Biodegradable plastic bags, garbage bags, food bags, towel, lunch box, plastic bottles, and even plastic wraps are now available from Jan, or through the Government of Nepal’s.”

"Our primary aim is to make the environment safe by helping the community use less plastic, as plastic is harmful to our environment," says Laxman Thapa, the company’s managing director.

Turkish ties up with Mega Bank

Turkish Airlines has partnered with Mega Bank Nepal Limited on travel facilities for the bank’s staff and credit card holding clients and employees for special discounted fares and extra baggage allowance upon presentation of the card. The facility is available to use with Turkish Airlines flights.

World Bank predicts recovery


"The economic outlook for Nepal is positive," says Kyle Zeller, the World Bank’s senior economist for South Asia. "Economic growth is expected to accelerate in the second half of 2021, with the economy expected to grow by 7.5% in 2021.

The report, "Economic Update Nepal 2021: Economic recovery with residual growth challenges," is available for download online. The report provides an in-depth analysis of the economy’s performance and outlook, including a forecast for the next two years.

The report notes that Nepal’s economy has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, with the tourism sector suffering significant losses.

"The tourism sector has been one of the hardest hit by the pandemic," the report says. "The government has taken steps to support the sector, including providing financial support to tourism businesses.

Kavalan Whisky in Nepal

Kavalan Single Malt produced by United Distillers and Beverage Co. Ltd. (UDB) is now available in Nepal. The brand is the first of its kind in the country.


"The introduction of Kavalan single malt in Nepal is a significant milestone for our company," says UDB managing director Ajay Kothari. "We are confident that the product will be well received by the Nepalese whisky enthusiasts.

EU debt relief for Nepal

Nepal is among the countries to receive a debt relief package of USD 4 billion (EUR 1.2 billion) through the European Union’s contribution of USD 1.6 billion to the Catastrophic Contingency Trust Fund (CCTF) set up by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The EU will also provide a debt relief package to the countries affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The debt relief is expected to provide an immediate boost to the economy, allowing the government to allocate more resources to social and economic development.

Bejaj showroom in Phulpin

Bejaj has inaugurated its new showroom in Patan for its two-wheelers and cars.

The showroom is located at the premises of the Bejaj Group in Patan.

The showroom is located at the premises of the Bejaj Group in Patan.

"We are happy to have opened this new facility in Phulpin, which will provide easy access to our customers in this area," says Bejaj Group managing director Rajiv Goyal.

The showroom will also be used to display the company’s range of two-wheelers and cars.

Tahina Terrace Opens

The new terrace restaurant Tahina is now open from 4 PM to 10 PM, serving signature dishes like the apeke palata, cutlet, and black pepper on grilled fish.

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The repatriation of Kathmandu’s stolen religious objects appears to be gathering pace.

In one e-mail exchange acquired by Nepal Times, the museum wrote: “We continue to have confidence in the propriety of the provenance of the piece. Though we had been aware of the Stolen Images of Nepal publication, we are unaware of any substantiated claims of theft of this piece; indeed, other publications discuss the piece without reference to a theft.”

Gyawali then got in touch with 99-year-old Ted Ullman, son of Jane and Edwina Ullman. He told Gyawali that he specifically was not to blame, and after hearing from the Denver Art Museum he would be happy to write a letter of support for Nepal’s efforts to repatriate this and other religious objects from Asia.

The Nepal Embassy in Washington, D.C., told Nepal Times it is in touch “informally” with the Denver Art Museum. It added that the Department of Archaeology had finished its forensic archaeological report and submitted it to the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kathmandu is waiting for the report to begin official correspondence with the Denver museum.

After the Laxmi Narayan that survived in Kathmandu on Monday was handed over to the Nepal Embassy in Washington last month, the Manhattan’s District Attorney’s Office transferred three other antiquities to the Nepal Consulate in New York: a 12th-century carved temple shaft depicting an Apsara, a 14th-century gold steeled Buddha in Bhumiparama Mudra, and a 13th-century seated Ganesh.

The District Attorney Office said the repatriation was part of its ongoing effort to return stolen and looted antiquities seized from the illicit collection of Rubabesh K капу, who was arrested in 2012. Along with heritage activists, Nepal government agencies are also stepping up efforts to bring back the stolen gods from museums and private collectors all over the world.

Lost Arts of Nepal in its Facebook page published two statues from Nepal that are in possession of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Pete Mort) in New York. They include a 9th-century “Shiva in Kusumakar Abode with Ancestra” which was originally a part of Kanyakumari Temple at Sleshya Bhuswan at Kathmandu, and a 14th-century Nityanevi originally from Iha-bahi in Patan.

The religious objects appear to have been stolen so long ago that people in those neighborhoods have no recollection of the gods that once resided in their temples.

“Since The Met previously has sent two statues back to Nepal voluntarily, I am confident they can do the same this time too,” the anonymous Facebook page admin of Lost Arts of Nepal wrote back in response to a Nepal Times report.

The Met have been told that the museum’s legal team is investigating the matter.

There are indications that the repatriation of Nepal’s stolen statues will now gather pace. Government officials here say The Art Institute of Chicago has said it is ready to return a 18th-century Chaturmukhi Shivalinga on 19 April.
Baby was buried under the rubble for 22 hours on 25 April 2015 and survived. But his family still struggles to cope with life.

- Monika Deupala

It is a sparse rented room with pink walls, a six-year-old Srijal Awal is preparing for his online Nepali class (pictured above) on a smartphone, leaning on a table propped up with a paint bucket.

His sister Sonia is coaching the first-grade baby girl made famous as Nepal’s “Miracle Boy” for having survived 22 hours under the rubble of the family’s home in Bhaktapur that was destroyed in the 2015 earthquake.

“He is playful and inquisitive, he keeps asking me when we will rebuild our house,” says Rashmi, her mother, who describes him as a happy child who likes to play with other neighbourhood children and watch tv.

The family’s single room has a sewing machine in one corner and the clothes for additional income. She has no answer for her son’s persistent questions about rebuilding their house.

Her husband Zhiam is a truck driver, but the pandemic and lockdowns have reduced his income.

When the earthquake struck at 11:56AM on 25 April 2015, Rashmi was out shopping; she rushed back as soon as she heard the sound. At their home, Srijal picked up his four-month-old brother, and tried to rush out of the room. A cupboard fell on top of them, and the house came down on top of them.

Sonia was unconscious when she was rescued a few hours later, and was rushed to hospital. But Srijal could not be found. Nepal Army rescuers had given up, but were called back in the morning when Rashmi heard a faint wail from under the rubble. They found Srijal covered in dust, with just a scratch in his leg. The photograph of soldier Dipak Rai and other rescuers holding the baby got widespread play in the national and international media.

In Nepal, the rescue rate is slow. The baby was rescued, but his home was buried in the dust. He lost the use of his arms and legs. The boy was taken to hospital in Kathmandu, but he was not able to move or speak.

Srijal was in a hospital bed for a week. The doctors said he would need surgery, but there were no resources to provide it. His family had no money to pay for his treatment.

After his surgery he was able to walk again, but he is still limited in his movements. He has regular check-ups at the hospital.

Quarter of Nepalis still hungry during pandemic

A year into the Covid-19 crisis, Nepalis have more food but still suffer under-nutrition

Nepal continues to suffer from pandemic-induced food insecurity even as Nepal sees the first signs of the second wave of Covid-19.

A new report released last week shows that 16.8% of households have inadequate food consumption, and 21.5% have insufficient food stock to meet their needs.

43% of children between 6-23 months did not meet the minimum recommended dietary needs.

The survey was conducted in December 2020 by the UN World Food Programme (UN-WFP) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, with support from the Australian government. It is the third in a series of nationwide surveys to assess the impact of Covid-19 on household food security in Nepal. The first two rounds were conducted in April, and August 2020.

The survey covered 4,816 households from all seven provinces, and was collected through live telephone interviews. The highest prevalence of food insecurity, as measured by poor nutrition, was found in Khatmandu Province, accounting for 4.7% of households, followed by Province 2 (3.4%), Gandaki (2.7%) and Sudurpashphin (2.2%).

Households have adopted negative livelihood coping strategies to address food shortages such as borrowing money, harvesting immature crops, selling livestock, household assets, or even house and property.

The good news is that the food security situation has been gradually improving, with a smaller proportion of households consuming inadequate diets in December 2020 compared to August and April 2020. More than 3 out of 4 respondents reported having food stocks, which nearly 50% had more than one month’s worth of food stock.

“The findings from the survey indicate gradual improvements in terms of the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on food security and livelihoods. Yet, the aggregated conditions persist and continue to affect Nepali households,” states the report.

“The impact of the Covid-19 crisis on job loss and income reduction remains notable and can further put pressure on income generation and livelihoods. Such prolonged exposure to adverse conditions, together with the upcoming lean season, can, in turn, lead to further risk of food insecurity.”

Eating of restrictions and opening of economic activities, as well as recently harvested summer crops and assistance from various government and aid agencies, are likely reasons for the improvement in food security.

However, analysis of the survey data shows that there is deepening food insecurity in areas that are chronically more vulnerable like western Nepal.

In fact, more households remain food insecure during the pandemic than five years ago. In December 2020, 17% of households had inadequate food consumption, but in December 2016 the figure was 15%.

In the survey, households with low education levels, a chronically ill member, female-headed households, and households living in rural areas were found to be more food insecure.

Similarly, loss of income was the largest impact on and medium traders (48%), remittance recipient families (44%), followed by daily wage earners in agriculture and cash crop producers (34%). A total of 25% of non-agriculture daily wage earners reported having a loss of income source followed by 13.8% agriculture-related daily wage labourer.

4
clearly, but the space is empty.

After his ancestral home was divided between the brothers, Bisham Awal ended up without a land title; his portion of the property is likely to be acquired by the municipality for a road-widening project. The family is planning to build a one-storey house for now, and save on rent.

Amul Thapa, who took the new-ironic image of Nepal Army rescuer Dipak Rai lifting Sanish from the rubble, visits the Awals regularly, but is frustrated by the state’s apathy towards the survivors.

“The rescue bought the family international fame, even the Prime Minister visited them but they remain where they are, their house is the only one left to be rebuilt in that lane,” says Thapa.

Nepal Army that played a crucial role in the rescue of Sanish, has been paying for the education of both the Awals through a scholarship they set up for until they graduate from high school. After finishing his primary school, Sanish will attend the Army’s high school in Sughulchi.

Sanish, who celebrated his sixth birthday in October, does not remember that fateful day, but he has grown up looking at the images of himself. Pointing at a cut-out of his picture from a newspaper from six years ago, he says he wants to become a soldier when he grows up.

At the site of the rescue, Rashmila talks to her son where he was trapped. Sanish has been told the story so often that he points to the spot above a half-buried door, and replies cheerfully: “Right here, I was underneath here.”

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Himalayan red rice is

A viral photograph makes a
rage in health-conscious

Monika Deupala
in Jumla

Jumla’s marvi red rice scored some notoriety in 2010 after a photograph went viral on social media of Prime Minister K P Oli and his younger son Pushpa Kami Oli tucking in to a lavish meal.

At the table with plates of red rice were business tycoon Durga Prasad, and the image made marvi synonymous with political cuisine. However, all the free publicity did nothing to boost demand for Jumla’s red rice in Kathmandu, where the government last month recognized it as a local brand.

Marvi was brought under the government’s food trade-management last month, and is being latched on by the government from Jumla to be sold in Kathmandu. Its price is fixed at Rs.225 per kg, and all this has turned out to be good news for farmers of Jumla and Sinja valley, known for the highest altitude where rice is cultivated in the world.

Red rice used to be sold only by businesses that promoted organic products in Kathmandu, but thanks to the publicity, marvi has gone mainstream. It is now packaged and sold in supermarkets, or home delivered at up to Rs.300 per kg.

All this is also good news for consumers, since red rice has much greater nutritional value than polished white rice. Himalayan red rice is pigmented and is packed with flavonoid antioxidants, protein and fibre, making it much more suitable than white rice also for those with cardio-vascular disease, cancer, diabetes and obesity.

Most of the nutrients in red rice are contained in the bran which gives it a nutty flavor, and the rice is even unhusked so as not to lose its wholesomeness. In white rice, the healthy bran is removed and most of what remains is carbohydrates.

“Marvi is the highest cultivated rice in the world, grown at above 2000m, and takes almost nine months to harvest,” explains rice expert Rajendra Upadhyey. “It is not mass-produced like other types of rice, and the environment it is grown in and the absence of pesticides makes it very healthy. The only fertilizer used is manure.”

Here in Sinja and Jumla, spring has arrived and with it the preparation of the once-frozen terrace for the year’s rice crop. There is no need to wait for rain here since there is plenty of water for irrigation from the Til and Him rivers which are swelled by snowmelt.

Shanta Kami is waiting at the local watermill to get her millet harvest pounded into flour. “I am expecting my son to visit soon. More than most of the families have migrated down to the plains for work, but they come home when it is time to plant the marvi,” she says.

While much of the farm work is now done by women, they work for the men to help with the ploughing of the fields. Seasonal migration for employment has been one of the main means of making an income for the men in Sinja, but come March-April, they return home to tend the annual agricultural cycle of planting marvi rice, before leaving for their jobs again.

Women pounding marvi is a common sight in the villages of Jumla district. Reddish-brown when harvested, the glutinous grains take a light purplish texture when cooked, and retain the nutritional ingredients.

Dal Bahadur Budha, 61, owner of an eatery in Cotiabahi, near Sinja says he has noticed a sudden spurt in buyers of marvi rice.

“Previously, visitors would buy beans, apples, potatoes, local medicinal herbs and tea, but these days, the demand for marvi rice has picked up,” he says.

“In the past, we were tempted by what Kathmandu ate and we always used to wonder what white rice tasted like. But after getting to know the health benefits of marvi, we have gone back to our own red rice,” Panchali Budha, 46, from nearby Kharpata village adds that childhood memories of the small and taste of red rice. She had rung along with her father to Mugu when she was young to trade the family’s marvi crop.

Many local shepherds work in Mugu and in the Chinese border to sell the rice. There used to be interpreters who helped us better our rice, potatoes, beans and sheep for salt, spices and bananas from China,” she remembers.

These days are over. The new Karnali Highway, all the publicity surrounding marvi, and a more health-conscious population means red rice has a ready market in Kathmandu and other cities.

Even while red rice has leaped from Twitter to farmers’ markets in Kathmandu to become a nationally recognized food item, there is still no market system or infrastructure in place in Jumla for farmers to sell the rice.

The growing popularity of the marvi has also created the possibility of a new source of income for the people of Jumla. But, as is often the case, the farmers who actually grow the crop still get a small piece of the pie.

Still, the popularity of marvi rice has lessened somewhat the demand in the Karnali and far-west for white rice, and the red variety is also bought by food-for-work agencies as wages for road-building labor.

Trader Sunder Upadhyay from Sinja says that since the region does not have to worry about pests because of its low temperature, storage of the crop has not been a hassle so far.

But putting in a system to trade the local produce would make it easier for local farmers to promote the rice in the market.
Malayan
is red hot

Eyes Jumla’s marsi rice all the conscious Kathmandu

Now, Marsi Beer

True to the adage that all publicity is good publicity, businessman Durga Prasai has used the unanswerable reputation that red rice got after his viral photograph to launch his own Marsi Beer brand.

Prasai named considerable notoriety after the photo of him having lunch with K.P. Oli and Postpa Koiral Dahal (served at his home in Thimi) went viral three years ago, and people even started teasing him as “Mr Marsi”.

Prasai decided to turn this to his advantage by building a brand around marsi to rehabilitate the goodness of red rice as well as his own name. He bought a brewery in Nawalparasi (reportedly for Rs. 20 million) and went from ‘lunch to lunch’ by selling the bottles in the market. The beer is said to be made from 70% barley and 30% red rice.

Prasai had organised that lunch to mediate the final negotiations for the merger of the Maoist Centre led by Dahal and Oli’s UML. The electoral alliance of the two parties propelled them to victory and the unified Nepal Communist Party had a near two-thirds majority in Parliament after the 2017 election.

However, ill-feelings soon went sour between Dahal and Oli until the Supreme Court ruled on 7 March that the NCP should be disbanded into the Maoist Centre and UML, again. Since then, Prasai has been seen to be bickering his hats with Oli, and even got the prime minister to inaugurate his cancer hospital in Biratnagar. Oli then accused Prasai publicly that his BGC Teaching Hospital would soon get affiliation from Kathmandu University.
KATHMANDU

14 - 15 April

AIR QUALITY INDEX

Without rains, the wildfires have continued to spread across the country. In the past week, there have been smoke fires in western Nepal, and the Indian state of Chhattisgarh that has been affected by the Himalayan foothills by prevailing winds. This has added to Kathmandu Valley’s already bad smoke situation. There may be a slight reprieve to the worst wildfire season in Nepal, but experts forecast serious winds from advancing 2023 Nepal springs much needed precipitation. Go to www. nepaklm.com for live hour by hour AQI measurement for Kathmandu city centre.

Garden tours and guided walks around tranquil gardens and the surrounding rural landscapes, a must for those who want to escape the hustle and bustle of the city.

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Everything you wanted to know about mountains

Pokhara’s International Mountain Museum is open again after the Covid-19 shutdown

Shristi Karki in Pokhara

A

year of shutdown, Pokhara’s International Mountain Museum is once

more welcoming visitors — mostly students and Nepalis.

The carefully curated museum tries to encompass everything about

mountains everywhere, with a special emphasis on the Himalayas. The architecture of its angular roof (a model resemblance

mountain peaks, and three, 8,000m mountains are visible from the

museum’s tall, north-facing glass windows – Annapurna, Dhaulagiri and Manaslu.

The museum has everything from anthropology, culture, exploration and adventure on the

mountains. It depicts hardships of living in difficult terrains, the

linguistic and ethnic diversity of the Himalayas, the geology of the

world’s highest mountain range, and mountaineering

memorabilia.

“Tkis just a museum, we made it a space for learning and research. Everyone is

welcome here — tourists, students, researchers, or academics,” says

Kal Bahadur Gurung of the Nepal Mountaineering Association that

 manages the museum that first opened in 2002. “These exhibits

mean a great deal to Nepal’s mountain communities and the

museum is crucial to tourism in Pokhara.

The museum showed up to a 37% annual increase in visitors

 before the pandemic, with the highest single-day visitor record of

5,000 in 2018. Visitor numbers plummeted to nearly zero for most

of 2020, and only recently started to pick up again with student and

domestic tourists.

The exhibition space is divided into two rooms, and the building

 itself is airy and expansive, with lots of natural light, and the

multicoloured steel beams holding the roof giving the hall an

impression of added height. To the left lies a Buddhist gumba, indicative of how Buddhist

faith is intertwined with Nepal’s mountain communities.

There are three main sections, the first of which is the

‘Hall of Mountain People’. The first time exhibits show

mountain communities around the world, the flora and fauna in the

mountains of Taiwan, Japan and Slovenia, with mannequins
dressed in the traditional garb of those regions.

Nepal’s own mountain communities are also exhibited, starting

with the Sherpa people, to Rai, Limbu, Sunwar, Pan, Gurung, and Chhituray communities. Their lifestyles are

 showcased with cooking utensils, farming tools, musical

instruments and even traditional weapons.

Further along, the basement opens up to the ‘Hall of

Mountains’, which begins with posters of the 14 peaks above

6000m—10 of them in Nepal. The posters, the kind one

would perhaps find hung on a

 travel agent’s office, are offset by the personal accounts of

mountaineers with photos.

“On the narrow range, we held hands in excitement, then the surface beneath our

feet began to crumble and seemed likely to break away, so I straddled the ridge like a

horse,” reads Toshio Izumi’s account of his Manaslu ascent.

A few bests are arcs from various parts of Nepal and

with their age ranging from 2.5

 million to 3.7 million years. We

are reminded that the “Yellow

Sand” on top of Mt Everest is

 actually limestone, and was once

at the bottom of the ocean.

One would hope that the exhibits were better

designed, and maintained, and not just a random collection of dusty artifacts in glass cases. But

this being Nepal, one has to be

glad this museum even exists.

There are sections on early

Himalayan explorers like Siki

Kawaguchi, Eric Shipton, Timme

and Toni Hagen. But perhaps

the most interesting and informative

part of the exhibition for

visitors would be the one on the history of mountaineering expeditions, with some of the

early climbing equipment that forces visitors to

wonder how early mountainclimbers ventured into the ‘death zone’ with

clothing and boots like that.

No mountain museum would be complete without the threat

that the climate crisis poses on the

mountains, and there is a whole section showing the consequences of

the rapid melting of the ice.

From the vantage point of the ground floor, it is easy to see that

the museum is filling up with the

afternoon crowd. Three women

take pictures in front of the umbrellas in the Hall of Mountain People. A couple of young children run

around Lams Ngawang Kechu

Sherpa’s mandala on display in

front of the Taiwanese exhibit.

It looks like a normal day in

normal times when people take
day trips to the museum, but for

the Covid-19 peaks covering the

visitors’ faces.

http://www.internationalmountainmuseum.org/
Countries across the world are using technology to contain, manage, prevent and track COVID-19 cases, yet Nepal has fallen behind in the pandemic app race.

China, being the first country to contract COVID-19, was naturally first off the mark to launch a ‘health code’ app nationwide. Installing the app was made mandatory by the government, and while many hailed it as a breach of privacy and part of China’s state surveillance system, it was also the only effective way to control the virus across a wide population.

The app directed people to stay indoors, report their travel history and share knowledge of any symptoms they may be experiencing. Each user then received a coloured QR code to indicate their infection status: red for those considered infected, yellow for those at risk of infection, and green for those deemed safe.

Public spaces could only be accessed with a green QR code, to ensure that a Covid-positive individual doesn’t enter, say, a shopping mall and endanger others.

India followed China in its contact tracing app (CTA) strategy and method when Prime Minister Modi’s office set up a committee to guide and quickly launch the ‘AarogyaSetu’ app. AarogyaSetu is Sanskrit for ‘the bridge for liberation from disease’.

It was pretty clear that if the Indian government was activating a robust PR campaign around the app as soon as it was launched on both Android and iOS app stores, Indian celebrities such as national cricket captain Virat Kohli and Bollywood actor Anil Kapoor endorsed the app via video clips requesting citizens to safeguard themselves from getting infected.

The app crossed 100 million downloads and broke Pokemon Go’s record of being the fastest growing app ever.

It has been over a year since the app came into mandatory practice, and now airports, malls, clinics and local businesses ask Indian citizens to show their AarogyaSetu app to report their Covid status before they come into contact. As in China, the app uses the green-negative and red-yellow positive simple colour-based communication.

The app is not based on prediction but strives for accuracy in reporting. In major cities like Mumbai, the government sends a home testing medical team to two members of households, and if their report is positive, it automatically updates their Covid status on the app, which is linked to their Aadhaar Card (government-issued ID).

In the United States, the federal government did not launch an official app or impose any mandatory rules to use CTAs. Instead, local governments collaborated with Apple and Google to develop regional apps relying on Bluetooth technology, but only for those who wish to use it. These apps ensure user safety by not storing personal information on their servers.

A survey revealed that roughly 16% of US citizens supported or accepted the use of CTAs to control the pandemic, compared to a whopping 80% in China, indirectly suggesting that the Chinese have more trust in their government institutions than the American ones.

Unlike these large economies, that have developed quick action digital tools to contain the virus, Germany came up with the ‘Corona-Warn-App’ months later, without any rush, taking its time to lockdown possible data privacy issues. The download of the German app is voluntary, and it is designed to respect people’s privacy by not permanently storing personal information.

Iceland launched its ‘Rakning Covid-19’ last April, being the country with the highest penetration of any CTA in the low (14% of inhabitants were adopting apps). However, the Icelandic Covid response team claimed that the app alone did not result in high impact. Manual tracing techniques like phone calls were more effective and required alongside the digital tool.

Iceland and a few other European countries have been propagating the possible movement, trusting the citizens to follow guidelines without requiring hefty fines that force them to conform. Sweden, however, has largely rejected the idea of an official tracking app, despite having more COVID-19 cases than neighbours Denmark and Finland.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and other Asian countries have rolled out CTAs, as with CTAs. Other countries have developed apps to disseminate information about the pandemic. It is a collaboration between several IT startups and the Ministry of Health and Population to financially and technically support the government in developing an effective app.

With over 300,000 app downloads and over 3 million active views, the app offers national COVID-19 updates, but not regional or local detailed information that would help people navigate their areas smartly. There is no guarantee of data privacy or any marketing campaign launched to promote the app’s usage.

The lack of transparency and quality of software development is a concern for many. The app’s functionality is only the basic boss in producing a low-cost, low-quality product that makes the user assume that the app engages with the user with well-planned, well-executed marketing campaigns.

Hamro Swasthya is available in both English and Nepali, and the top feature is that the app has a questionnaire asking the user to fill personal information along with answers to questions about symptoms faced and recent travel (note: it does not ask for domestic travel history or only international) in order to make an educated guess on whether the user has contracted the virus or not.

There is a section on plasma donation, with a form for both donors and those who require a blood donation. Another feature is the suspect report, where anyone can complain about anyone who they suspect is at risk of West Nile virus.

This feature is clearly not thoroughly thought out, as it can be easily misused.

There is a nationwide map to guide people to the nearest hospital, but there is plenty of room of improvement regarding the UK’s IOD and information provided (lack of address and phone numbers). The best sign of a good app is how often it is improved and optimised. But as the government started rolling out vaccines, information regarding availability is missing in Hamro Swasthya.

Tap, Track, Trace and Test
Tackling Covid-19 through mobile apps

Further warning that citizens who do not use government’s app on their phones may face up to three years in jail.

Bahrain set a record this year by being the first country with a CTA that allows users to book free vaccine appointments via the ‘Bahrain’ app, even letting people choose between the Pfizer,BioNTech and AstraZeneca vaccines. Bahrain quickly became the second country vaccinated country in the world after Israel.

Here in Nepal, the government launched the ‘Hamro Swasthya’ app to disseminate information about the pandemic. It is a collaboration between several IT startups and the Ministry of Health and Population to financially and technically support the government in developing an effective app.

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The ball is in Nepal’s cricket court

After corruption, infighting and Covid, Nepal’s cricket is ready for bigger things

Prakash Guragain

I t was the final of the 2018 ICC World Cricket League in Windhoek, and Nepal was in dire straits. Needing 195 runs to win, the team was down to its last wicket at 144.

Sandeep Lamichhane and Kushal Malla steadied the bowler’s nerves and Nepal managed to cross the finish line to qualify for the inaugural 2019 World Cup, which was held in New Zealand. The team’s performance was a testament to the country’s resilience and determination.

But the joy was short-lived. Nepal’s cricket, in the two years that followed, was marred by corruption, infighting and the Covid-19 pandemic. The team’s performance at the 2020 World Cup Qualifiers was disappointing.

But the team is back in business. The Nepal Cricket Board (NCB) has been working hard to improve the domestic structure and the national team’s performance. The National Cricket Academy has been set up to nurture young talent and the team’s recent performances have been promising.

The 2021 Asia Cup, which was held in Dubai, was a missed opportunity. Nepal lost all their matches and failed to qualify for the 2022 T20 World Cup. However, the team’s performance in the Asia Cup semi-final against Bangladesh showed that the team is improving.

The Nepal Cricket Board has also been working on improving the domestic structure. The Domestic One-Day Cup and the Domestic T20 Cup have been revived, and the Domestic Twenty20 League has been set up.

The country’s cricketing body, the Nepal Cricket Association (NCA), has been working hard to improve the standard of domestic cricket. The NCB has also been working on improving the standards of coaching and administration.

The sudden rise of cricket in Nepal has transformed the game from an elite pastime to a beloved sport of millions of fans. The country’s cricketing body, the Nepal Cricket Association (NCA), has been working hard to improve the standard of domestic cricket. The NCB has also been working on improving the standards of coaching and administration.

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Nepal to conduct census

Country’s changing social demography will be explored, even as it confronts a 2nd coronavirus wave

Shreeti Karle

Nepal is being engulfed by a second Covid19 wave, but key data has not been collected. The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) on 1 April finished training to an ambitious National Population and Household Census scheduled for 6-21 June.

The first four censuses from 1991 to 1995 were primarily head-counts conducted to gather data about able-bodied Nepalis who could be sent to fight. The British Empire’s wars were overseas. However, the censuses since 1992 have documented the country’s changing social demography.

Each national census since then has shown increased diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion and languages spoken. This year’s census is Nepal’s 12th and because of greater social awareness, inclusion and empowerment, it is expected to add to the country’s linguistic and ethnic richness.

The democratic wave in Nepal after 1990 played a major role not only in collecting census data on ethnic caste, linguistic and religious groups but these data have also become instruments in understanding the interregional and inter-ethnic relationships among the 107,792 local government units.

Nepal’s topographical range and its location inside the Himalayas has given the country ethnolinguistic diversity unparalleled in the world. The first modern census of 1962-64 was the first to collect data on languages spoken, and all following censuses have asked respondents their mother tongue and their second language.

The 1962 census put Nepal’s language count at 46, and the number actually deceased in the three subsequent censuses, to 36 in 1981, then more dramatically in 17 in 1971. In fact, response to census questionnaires on social demographic data shows a direct correlation to Nepal’s political and socio-cultural evolution. For example, the number of languages began to increase from the 1961 census onwards.

“The status of Nepal’s languages and linguistic diversity have reflected well in Nepal censuses only during periods of democracy, and not in times of tyranny and uncertainty,” explains Lok Bahadur Lopaha of the Nepal Language Commission. Indeed, fluctuations in the language count correspond with major political upheavals in Nepal’s history.

The 2011 census puts the official number of languages at 132. However, the National Language Commission has identified eight more languages since its establishment in 2016, and it is expected to be reflected in this year’s census.

Yet, even as new languages are identified, some of Nepal’s indigenous languages are in danger of becoming extinct. The 2011 census discovered 167 languages having less than 1,000 speakers as being endangered. Among them, the Sher, Khomun, and Tilung languages have only one speaker each and are not even registered in this year’s census.

In a bid to better understand Nepal’s linguistic diversity and identify the status of languages spoken, the Commission and CBS have introduced a new question to the language section in the census forms. In addition to another ‘original’ and ‘second language’ responses, this time will also be asked to mention their ‘ancestral’ language.

“Since the language of teaching and communication is predominantly in Nepali, the mother tongue for many people across Nepal’s ethnic communities has become Nepali as well. Adding ancestral language to the questionnaire will help us...”

Remembering the 1961 census

Adventures in the first national census after King Mahendra’s coup

Shibab Rais

Six years ago, I arrived at Kathmandu’s Canterbury district as part of a 14-member team to help conduct the sixth decadal national census in far-western Nepal. It was March 1961, and in those days because of the lack of roads, we had to travel across India to get from one part of Nepal to another.

The first part of our journey was on the Tribhuvan Highway from Kathmandu to the Indian border. But the newly-built road was blocked by a landslide, and our bus swapped passengers with another bus going to Kathmandu.

From Dhangadi in the Tarai, we walked up rough trails to Dotti, Bulpang, Aschtam, Bajura and Dalludburg. Fellow travelers were traders selling glass and building supplies, sailors, and clothes. Far-western Nepal is remote even today, but back then it was at the edge of nowhere.

There were no lodges or tea houses along the trail, and we often had to camp in the forests and cook food in the clearings. In the Tarai, the jungles were teeming with wildlife and we could hear tigers roaring by night. We lit fires to keep predators away.

After King Mahendra dissolved Parliament and established the Panchayat system in December 1960, former MPs were deployed in different roles across the country. Many of them were appointed to serve as governors—a strategic move by the king to further weaken the party system. But governorship was still a powerful position, so much so that the only two concrete buildings in Dalludburg in 1961, one was the home of the governor, and the other was the prison.

In Dotti, the jungle was still what it looked like today—a ridge-top town with cobblestone streets and traditional houses with Adelaide roofs. Because it had some Newer settlers from Kathmandu Valley, Siligadi had neighbourhoods named Agra and Indranath. We set up our census headquarters near the market, next to the prison, in a house we rented for four months. Then, the census work began. Enumerators would leave for their designated areas with data forms and documents. Officer Shankar Bhatti, who grew up in Siligadi, and I stayed back at the census office.

Sushil had accompanied me as a representative of the Everest Dialogue Committee which conducted interviews with governors and sent them back to Kathmandu where they would be published in newspapers, or broadcast via Radio Nepal. The governor we met were happy with me, because other governors did not get as much media coverage as they did. We then walked to Dalludburg and tried to conduct the census with two assistants in tow. I met with Governor Devendra Bahadur Tumbahampah of Dalludburg and Governor Satarayansya (Sp of Bikaner and then ceased over to India to get to Dacca, and later Bhubaneswar in Orissa) in Bikaner. In Bikaner, we met the headmaster of Satarayansya High School, who like many others across Nepal at the time, was Indian.

We even reached the farthest point you could go from Kathmandu in those days: the villages of Guji, Nahi and Kuti in the disputed Kaisarband and Limpayushi area. The territory that the government of Nepal had actually conducted a census there in 1961 has been cited as irrefutable proof that the territory east of the main channel of the Kali River has always been a part of Nepal. We took us another 20 days to return to Siligadi via Thalaia and Khagpat. We also observed the census in southern Dotti, which was going smoothly. I am 86 now, but then as a young man I had no problem walking up and down those rugged and remote mountains.

Since 1961, as far as western Nepal was far behind the rest of the country. There were few educated people, and health and nutrition levels were dismal. If we saw any white houses with tin roofs, we understood them to be schools. Teachers from around the villages were deployed as enumerators during the census, but there were not enough schools in the region. So recruiting data collectors was a challenge in itself.

Enumerators collected data through household and individual questionnaires, and earned four paisa for each person whose particulars they collected. However, it was difficult to find enumerators who could rely on. Some would collect four paisa too little to bother going after every individual, while others would pass off and exaggerate the figures to earn more money.

This position was equivalent to that of a branch officer, whose safety was 235, as I walked across far-western Nepal for the 1961 census.
amidst Covid-19 surge

ascertain which languages have lost
speakers,” Lohani explains. “If
the respondents answer openly, we
might get more accurate data, and
there is a possibility that the total
number of endangered languages
will be double of what it is now.”

Unlike classifications in data
related to language, the number of
Nepalis practicing various religions
has continued to increase over
since Nepal began to keep faith
records in the census of 1952/53. The
1952 census recognised only
two major religions: Hindu
and Buddhist, and Islam, Judaism
and Christianity were added to the
census in 1961, Jain in 1991, Sikh
and Bahai in 2001, and Bon and
Prakriti Bhaktas being the latest
additions in 2011.

However, even as the absolute
number of Nepal practising
various religions increase, the
percentage of Nepalis who identify
as Hindu has declined over the
years from 89% to 81% of the
total population. Meanwhile the
percentage of Nepal Christians has
continued to increase from zero in
1952 to 1.4% of the population in
2011.

The gradual decline in the percentage of Nepal’s Hindu
population has brought to the
forefront conversations about
religious freedom after the country
became secular, but has also been a
cause for concern about religious
conversion and proselytisation by
western and Korean Evangelical
groups in recent years.

Revealingly, the 2011 census
showed that the number of Nepal’s
Hindu population at 81,000 in
urban areas and almost 290,000
in rural areas.

As most of the Nepali people
live in rural areas, it is natural that
there are more people following
a particular type of religion in rural
areas. But it also gives a strong
message that rural people could be
motivated more easily to change
their religion if external factors play
a role in following their
religious faiths correctly,” writes Dil Bahadur Dare
in the Population Monograph
of Nepal.

This also raises concerns
about how individual
respondents might hesitate to
be forthcoming about their religious
identity due to a pressure to say
they belong to the same faith as
their family members, or fear of
 sucks that if they admit to
following a different religion.

But census officials do not believe
these issues will affect
the accuracy of data this year.

“Religion is an individual
decision, and as such, respondents
are free to disclose their religion
regardless of family or ethnic
background,” says Tirtha Raj
Chaudhary of the CBS. “Our
enumerators are trained to ask
questions individually to each
member of the household, so we
anticipate little error in data
as far as religion is concerned.”

Even though an individual
or community’s ethnic identity
is intricately tied to a sense of
linguistic and religious
belonging, caste and ethnicity
were only included for the
first time in the 1991 census,
40 years after Nepal began
to keep records of language and
religion. Fifty caste or ethnic
groups were identified in the
1991 census, 100 in 2001 and
123 in 2011.

“The rise in the consciousness
of identity, and the consequent
desire to project one’s group as
distinctive and unique, has also
contributed to the increase in
the number of caste and ethnic
groups,” writes Pitamber Shrestha
in his 2014 analysis of the 2011
Census. Some Aspects of Nepal’s
Social Demography.

Yet even as Nepalis seek
to carve out separate identities in
the current socio-cultural climate,
studies and experts acknowledge
that there is a gap in data due
to the absence of extensive surveys
to identify Nepal’s distinct ethnic
compositions and cultures.
Updated tourist information

Nepal’s tourism planners urgently need to update the country’s guidebooks so that visitors arriving in Kathmandu know exactly what to expect, and are not taken by surprise that the country still retains many water signs from the early 20th century. Nepal is not a country where the tourist industry has matured, and many of its attractions remain unexplored.

FACTS ABOUT NEPAL: Nepal is the oldest nation in South Asia and the youngest country in the world. It is surrounded by two的事物 India and China, with the border in the south being the Himalayas, and the border in the north being the Kunlun Mountains. Nepal is a mountainous country, with mountains ranging from 2,600-7,000 meters, and an area ranging from 550,000 km² to 1,070,000 km². It can be said that Nepal is still in its early stages of development.

GETTING THERE: Nepal is an adventure destination, and it will be fun getting there. Kathmandu is connected to the rest of the world by several international flights, however some may find it easier to travel overland to simply experience the spirituality of the superman route through time and space to get to Nepal through picturesque landscapes.

WHAT TO BRING: Due to the global pandemic, there are some common sense precautions every visitor must take before embarking on a trip to Nepal, such as masks, sanitizers, visors, and gloves. Even if you are not planning to drink at the bars, it is mandatory to drink in Kathmandu. As a tourist, it is important to be respectful to the locals and to follow the government’s guidelines for the houses, walk along the main roads, and to the beautiful houses.

HEALTH TIPS: The good news for travelers is that Nepal has not been affected by the coronavirus in Nepal. You don’t need to be overly concerned about the COVID-19 situation because there are more serious issues to worry about. Here are a few things to remember:

- Wash your hands regularly:
- Avoid touching your face:
- Wear a mask:
- Practice social distancing:
- Avoid crowded places:
- Stay at home if you are unwell.

Nepal is a land of peaks. The highest peak in the world is Everest, which is the highest peak in the world. In addition, the country also offers a beautiful landscape. In Nepal, you will find beaches, mountain ranges, and beautiful waterfalls.

Useful Phrases:

- Do you speak English?
- How much does it cost?
- Where can I find...

While on a trip:

- Try new foods:
- Drink plenty of water:
- Avoid spicy food:
- Avoid alcohol:

Greetings and Etiquette:

- How are you?
- Thank you:
- Excuse me:
- Hello:
- Goodbye:

The Ass