



standard
chartered

Make international payments online up to
USD 500 in a year with our USD Prepaid Card.

For more details, contact our 24X7 client care centre
at +977 1 4781800.

T&C apply

HIMALAYAN ARABICA COFFEE
Local and Fresh Roasted
Coffee
SCAN TO BUY ONLINE
@WhatsApp 98510 23082
fb/himalayanArabica

INDOOR INTERIORS FURNITURE
Our Services:
All kinds of Wooden & Metal Furniture, Aluminum, Partition/Doors/Windows, House Painting, Flooring & Furnishing and Decoration & Renovation
9851086032 (Netra Prasad Ghimire)
Buddha Nagar, Kathmandu
Tel: 4780869, 4784347, Email: netrapdghimire@gmail.com

eScan
Anti-Virus
TOTAL PROTECTION for Computers, Mobiles & Tablets
An ISO 27001 Certified Company
Contact no.: 01-4330980
www.escanav.com

KANTIPUR KITCHEN EQUIPMENT PVT. LTD.
A COMPLETE HOSPITALITY SOLUTION
Factory/Showroom: Nagarjun-4, Sitapaila, Kathmandu, Nepal | Tel: 01-5383781/01-5302305
Email: nepalkitchen@yahoo.com

HEALTH AT HOME
Nepal's first home based service providing quality health care solution
OUR CARE SERVICES:
• Doctor Visits • Physiotherapy
• Tele Consultation • Medical Travel & Appointments
• CareGivers • Lab's
• Medical Equipments • Nurses
CALL US FOR DETAILS:
www.healthathome.com.np | +977-9818360166

Mom in Delhi, Dad in Kathmandu

A *Nepali Times* reporter is herself caught up in a Covid-19 story she is reporting

● **Alisha Sijapati** in New Delhi

Even as the pandemic spread across the Subcontinent last year, and one country after another went into lockdown, I lost my grandmother. She was 95, and spent her last days in an ICU bed at a hospital in Kathmandu where we saw her only for a few minutes.

The doctors briefed us outside, some days were good some days were bad. It was a time of stress and anxiety, as we sensed her slipping away. Despite her age, it was difficult to accept that a woman with such warmth and vitality was gone.

But life moves on, and I waited for a new beginning. Things were looking up in Nepal as the daily Covid-19 case count went down to the double digits in March, and there were days without a single fatality. I started making plans to visit Delhi, to meet my mother and sister whom I had not seen for two years, and also to report on stories.

Even the best-laid plans go awry. As the date of my flight to Delhi neared, we started hearing of the surge in Maharashtra, and although cases in Delhi were also rising, it looked safe enough to travel.

I had my pre-flight PCR test 72 hours ahead of my flight on 17 April, and in the midst of a violent thunderstorm and power cut, got the results. I was negative, but my father, step-mother and three-year-old step sister were positive.

They showed symptoms, and the disaster was unfolding in front me. The pressure was getting too much to handle. I had no choice but to become a guardian to my family, ensuring medicines, home isolation, finances and groceries before I flew off to Delhi the next day.

The flight is a blur. The departure area at Kathmandu airport was crammed with Indian nationals -- not flying to New Delhi as I first thought, but to Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong. Direct flights from India were suspended, so Indians were flying there via Kathmandu. This was also why my Delhi air fare was three times higher than normal.

I landed in Delhi to discover that my mother and sister were running high fever, and had all the Covid-19 symptoms. I could not go



ALISHA SIJAPATI

home to join them, and checked into a guest house nearby.

Cases were surging in New Delhi, hospitals were running out of beds and oxygen, and the crematoria were packed. PCR results took five days. Chief Minister of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal declared a one week lockdown, which has since been extended by another week.

My mother's conditions got worse by the day, but even though I was only a block away in Defence Colony, all I could do was sit in the hotel room and talk to her on the phone. I tried reading books, but all kinds of scenarios kept playing out in my mind, and I could not concentrate. I just stared at the ceiling fan blowing hot air as the temperature outside touched 42 degrees.

The news from Kathmandu was not good. My father's oxygen level had gone down because of Covid-19 pneumonia, and he had to

be admitted to hospital. I was always the one boosting my family's morale, assuring them that things would be all right, but here in this hotel room, I broke down.

My father was in hospital in Kathmandu, my mother was alone in her room in New Delhi with high fever, my sisters were both sick, separated by 1,000km. And I was helpless in a hotel room. I listened to them sob on the phone. I remembered my grandmother's suffering, and it scared me to think that the worst might yet come.

Delhi's online stores were overwhelmed, and could deliver medicines and groceries. I put on a double mask and went out into the oven-like heat to buy groceries and medicines, and deliver them to my mother's doorstep.

Today, 29 April is two weeks since I arrived in Delhi. There are other British and American Indians in the hotel, also stranded. Their parents are also Covid-19 positive

and they cannot visit them, nor can they fly back to the UK and America.

We talk every day, keeping our morale up. We have developed a special bond, the grief and uncertainty uniting us.

I try to think about the hundreds of thousands of families whose lives have been turned upside down by this emergency. We mentally prepare ourselves to lose our loved ones, but we must also celebrate their lives and accept that there is no reality harsher than death.

There is a call from Kathmandu. Thankfully, my father is discharged. His oxygen levels are up, he is weak but at least he is home. My mother is also doing better, but her fever has not gone down.

I report a story about the plight of Nepalis in India, interviewing them in Goa, Maharashtra and elsewhere (See page 13). Compared to what the Tiruva family is going through in Goa, we are not so badly off. There are Nepalis in Delhi who hired taxis to the Nepal border because they cannot find hospital beds here. Three Masters' students went back to Nepal after their hostel was closed, as the virus spread among students.

I quiz Nepal's ambassador to India Nilambar Acharya about why Kathmandu is asking New Delhi for oxygen and medical support when things are so bad in India itself. He tells me the Indian government has assured him it will put Nepal on a "priority" for Covishield vaccines.

Tears do not come to me easily since Granny's passing. But the tragedies I have reported on this week have taken an emotional toll. There is not much more I can do as a journalist than to communicate the pain and danger to the public. This has become personal. It is not just a job anymore.

For those taking the disease lightly and complaining about lockdowns, let me tell you: this virus is ugly. It looks like it will get even uglier. If I was not in New Delhi now, or if my whole family had not been infected, I too might have been ignorant of the danger.

The constant whine of ambulances outside is a maddening reminder that the virus is still running amok out there. 🇳🇵



GET IT ON Google play Download on the App Store

download happiness

Watch Nepali Movies, Hollywood Movies, Reality Shows,
Short Movies, Web Series & 70 TV Channels
Anywhere Anytime
On



Mayday, Mayday, Mayday

It may sound incongruous writing about labour and employment when Covid-19 is surging across the country.

But since Saturday is May Day, let us look at labour and migration. The unmet need to generate enough jobs for the 500,000 young Nepalis who enter the labour market every year, and the state's responsibility in facilitating safe and affordable migration for those who want to work abroad.

The Constitution says: 'The State shall pursue a policy of ensuring the right to work of the labor force, which remains as the major social and economic strength of the country, by providing them with employment and raising their participation in the management of enterprises, while at the same time protecting their rights and interests.'

Employment and migration are directly



as jobless, only a little over 10% got jobs—not for 100 days, but an average of 11.

The lesson is clear: local governments need to be empowered for decision-making and well-resourced and coordinate seamlessly with the federal government. Not learning this will lead to endemic complacency.

Everyone agrees that the PMEP is a great idea. But as usual, the proof of the pudding in Nepal is always in the eating. Proper implementation could have helped the poorest Nepalis during this crisis. It is a missed opportunity.

The PMEP was designed as a safety net for the poorest. During the Covid-19 crisis it is even more important to provide jobs for families who need the income the most.

A highly informal workforce also means a highly disposable workforce without social safety nets. Due to the drop in tourism, transport and retail trade, Nepal's service sector growth is at an 18 year low. Two out of every five workers lost their jobs with women, the young workers most affected.

Internal migration has also been hit by lockdowns, and we are once more seeing an exodus of Nepalis to their districts. Foreign employment is recovering, but slowly. Nepali workers

are fleeing a devastating Covid-19 surge in India (*page 13*). The impact will be felt by the poorest Nepalis, especially from western Nepal who opt for seasonal work.

The PMEP targets only the most vulnerable segment of the labour market. There are skilled, higher income groups who have

also lost jobs.

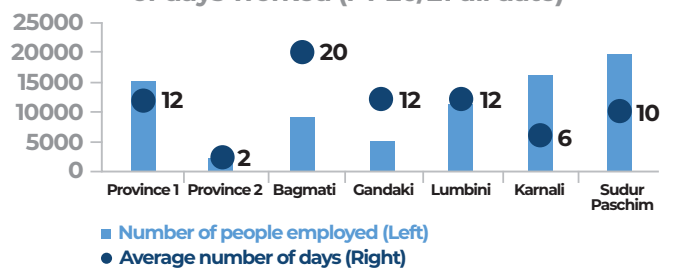
The labour market is under enormous pressure to absorb Nepalis who have been displaced from jobs, who would have migrated, the returnees, and new entrants. Many migrants see their own lifetime as solely that of sacrifice for their children, spending two to three decades in the Gulf just so the generation after them can break out of the cycle they have been stuck in.

When parents are not able to work, children's education suffers, and it is impacted by new school closures. Online education is not an option for the poorest.

The upcoming budget, just like last year's, is sure to include lofty promises about employment priorities. There will again be pledges to mobilise skills of returnees, even though past reintegration programs never even remotely met targets.

A more hopeful and helpful strategy would be to under-promise and over-deliver. That would be the honest way to mark this year's Labour Day. More work and less talk.

PMEP Beneficiaries and Average number of days worked (FY 20/21 till date)



linked to the pandemic, and as parts of the country go back into lockdown again, we have seen that the crisis will continue to have a direct impact on jobs, earnings and remittances in coming years.

The state has the unenviable task of balancing lives with livelihoods. Compared to the first wave, this one is a tsunami, and we witness in India the kind of havoc it can wreak. For the poorest Nepalis without savings and social safety nets, the pandemic is as much an economic crisis as a health emergency.

Even pre-pandemic, the lives of millions of Nepalis was precarious given the uncertainties of daily wages, and the inadequacy of subsistence agriculture.

This is where the Prime Minister's Employment Program (PMEP) that was launched with much fanfare in February 2019 held much promise. It planned a nationwide social protection program aimed at the poorest and jobless, guaranteeing them 100 days of employment annually. Those who registered but did not get jobs were to be provided unemployment allowance for 50 days a year.

Last year's budget promised jobs for 200,000 most vulnerable Nepalis affected by the lockdowns under this scheme.

As we report (*page 14-15*), the outcome is discouraging: of the 750,000 who registered

The more honest way to mark this year's May Day would be to under-promise and over-deliver.

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Adoption Scams

This paper two decades ago wrote how foreign parents often battle bureaucracy, corruption and humiliation to adopt Nepali babies.

After this Bal Mandir expose in the 2000s, the Nepal government tightened laws on adoption and prohibited prospective foreign parents from choosing the child they want to adopt.

But last year, an investigation in this paper showed a big discrepancy between Nepal's and foreign records of the number of Nepali children adopted in North America and Europe. It uncovered a trafficking ring that involved various child welfare agencies in Kathmandu.

Excerpts from the report 20 years ago this week in issue #40 27 April-3 May 2001:

Ever since Tania and Sergio decided to adopt a Nepali child three years ago, the Italian couple has been on an emotional roller coaster. They've joined an adoption association in Italy, been through a thorough screening at home, attended counselling sessions, been subjected to examinations by psychologists, and pursued an extensive paper chase in two continents. "At times it was extremely frustrating and humiliating," says Sergio. A doctor working in an Intensive Care Unit near Milan, Sergio is unable to father children because of a medical condition. "You



have psychologists, people who had never adopted a child, putting a microscope to your life. It was very difficult."

All that was forgotten last week, though, when the anxious couple first set eyes on Sunita—the three-year-old girl they are adopting with the help of an Italian adoption association recognised by their government, and Nepal's largest children's non-profit organisation and orphanage, Bal Mandir.

So far, nearly 1,000 Nepali children have found homes around the world. Since the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare took over, 69 children have been adopted, two-thirds from Bal Mandir. Adoptive parents are required to pay \$300 as a monitoring fee. Bal Mandir has seven homes or branches around the country with about 400 plus children.

Roughly, the procedure to adopt a Nepali child is this: Orphans or abandoned children are taken in at orphanages after the Chief District Officer's office has looked into their case. If they are not claimed within 21 days of issuing a public notice, the homes can put them up for adoption. Bal Mandir, which has by far the most streamlined operation, requires prospective parents to submit 21 different documents, translated in English and validated. Private adoption is also possible if you deal directly with the child's family.

From archives material of *Nepali Times* of the past 20 years, site search: www.nepalitimes.com

ONLINE PACKAGES



Sumina Shrestha channels the artistic abilities she has cultivated since childhood into tattoo art. Go online to watch how Shrestha's journey of self-discovery broke gender stereotypes in the industry and put her on the path of independence. Profile: *page 5*.



Nepal's mountaineering trails, such as the infamous "Toilet Paper Trail" between Lukla and EBC continue to deal with waste mismanagement as arrivals increase steadily in spite of Covid. Visit our YouTube channel to see how locals, community-based organisations and the private sector have joined forces to clean up the trail. Story: *page 6-7*.



Watch how backlogged expeditions from last year and new, attractive facilities have brought in more tourists to Everest Base Camp than ever despite the pandemic. It is business as usual here at Base Camp as it expands into a small city bustling with climbers and Sherpas. Story: *page 8-9*.

QUAKE AND COVID

I was just there recently ('Langtang copes with quake and Covid', Kunda Dixit, #1058). A little upgraded accommodation would easily take Langtang far in tourism.

Dawa

• Lets hope the finished structures have some resemblance to ethnic architecture. You can do it with earthquake resilient designs, bricks and cement is not in keeping with the National Park and what tourists come to see in Nepal.

Ian Wall

• Six years after the earthquake and the deadly avalanches April 2015, the people of Langtang are struggling to endure the collapse of tourism during the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic. The impacts of the two events become entangled. This is a timely report on the current situation. Hoping to go back to Langtang as soon as possible. I'm thinking of my Langtangpa friends every day.

Austin Lord

LANGTANG CHEESE

I have met these guys, bought cheese from them and even heard the story of Yeti from them ('Langtang revives its cheese heritage', Gyalbu Tamang, #1058!)

Pemba Prayag Sherpa

• Our dear friends in the mountains just sent YAK cheese from Langtang down to us yesterday!

Jason and Laura Haley

COVID CRISIS

Why is there no lock-down of borders between India and Nepal ('Kathmandu locks down again', Sonia Awale, nepalitimes.com)? Why are border crossings permitted either way? The Nepali government is totally irresponsible. If there is something 'bad' outside, the first thing to do is shut the windows and doors!

Eric Fairman

• Countries like Israel and UK have been able to break the chain because of mass vaccination of their citizens. Even Bhutan has been quite successful. The Chinese Vaccine has been very successful in reducing death and hospitalisation in countries like Chile too and is readily available. There is no other way out of this. The only way to end lockdowns and gain a little sense of normalcy is through herd immunity gained by infection or vaccination. Period.

Adarsha Raj Pandey

• Our leaders learnt nothing from the first wave, and made the second one more devastating ('Another Kathmandu exodus', Amit Machamasi, nepalitimes.com).

Lal Bahadur

• Yes, there is increasing line of Indian nationals trying to leave to Gulf countries, in Kapoorthara Marg, road leading to Indian Embassy ('Indians use Nepal to circumvent travel bans', nepalitimes.com). We see people walking without masks and there is no physical distancing. But we are compelled to travel through narrow lane filled with Indian nationals for our daily thoroughfares and we are at high risk from Covid infection.

Bipa Shrestha Tuladhar

WHAT'S TRENDING



How Langtang is Reviving Its Cheese Heritage

by *Gyalbu Tamang*

Head over to nepalitimes.com to learn how the cheesemakers of Langtang rebounded from devastating personal and material losses incurred in the 2015 earthquake to now prepare for life post Covid.

f Most reached and shared on Facebook

The Covid tsunami

by *Sonia Awale*

India's massive second wave is easily crashing through Nepal's porous, unchecked borders. Community transmissions of deadlier variants have taken root, and the capital city has now clamped a 15 days long prohibitory order. Follow our social media platform for the latest developments.

t Most popular on Twitter



Rebuilding Kathmandu after the 1934 quake

by *Alina Bajracharya*

The Ranas, despite their autocratic ways, set about systematically rebuilding Kathmandu after the 1934 earthquake. Their extensive construction and road network projects laid the groundwork for modern Kathmandu and some of its most iconic streets. Visit our website for full story.

🔥 Most visited online page

Langtang copes with quake and Covid

by *Kunda Dixit*

Langtang copes with the pandemic-induced collapse of tourism, while still recovering from the deadly 2015 avalanche. Despite the gloom and doom, locals are rebuilding, hoping that tourism will recover as Covid-19 fades. Read the feedback online.

💬 Most commented

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
The overall solid waste and its management in Khumbu is socially complex, environmentally challenging, and poorly understood. Here are some recommendations that can help manage #Everest's waste problem.

जंगको खलक @deepkunwar2
So every step of expedition does leave behind pollution, if not solid waste. GON must envision durable environment friendly policies whereby we can protect fragile landscape yet maintain tourism.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
India's Covid catastrophe hits Nepalis hard. Individual tragedies are just drops in India's vast ocean of grief as it is engulfed in the Covid-19 second wave. @AlishaSijapati reports from New Delhi.

Nimesh Dhungana @NimeshDhungana
Nepali migrants in India faced with a dilemma to be truthful about their ability to help fellow migrants as hope fast diminishes. "I am getting calls day and night from desperate Nepalis..... have lost hope and I cannot lie to them anymore and say I will try to help."

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Indians use Nepal to circumvent travel bans. Stuck by coronavirus restrictions, Indians use Kathmandu to fly abroad.

Roshan Shrestha @roshan_shrestha
Another blatant misuse of open border, that also during this pandemic without proper medical screening.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
A district court in Rasuwa has finally found a notorious wildlife trafficker guilty, nearly a year after he was arrested in Kathmandu.

Bishow Parajuli @BishowParajuli
These criminals must be given harsh punishment, so that we conserve our wild life & economic benefits from tourism for the country.



A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

TIME TO MEET AGAIN: TORONTO

Have a healthy journey with all precautions taken down to the smallest detail for your in-flight safety.



TURKISH AIRLINES

CANADA

How Thukten Phillip Sherpa got his name

The unusual story of the godson Prince Philip acquired during his first visit to Nepal in 1961

● Lisa Choegygal

The Sherpa leader and guardian of the yeti scalp, Konjo Chumbi, and his young wife were hurrying down from Khumjung on the Sagarmatha trail for an audience with Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip during their visit to Nepal in 1961.

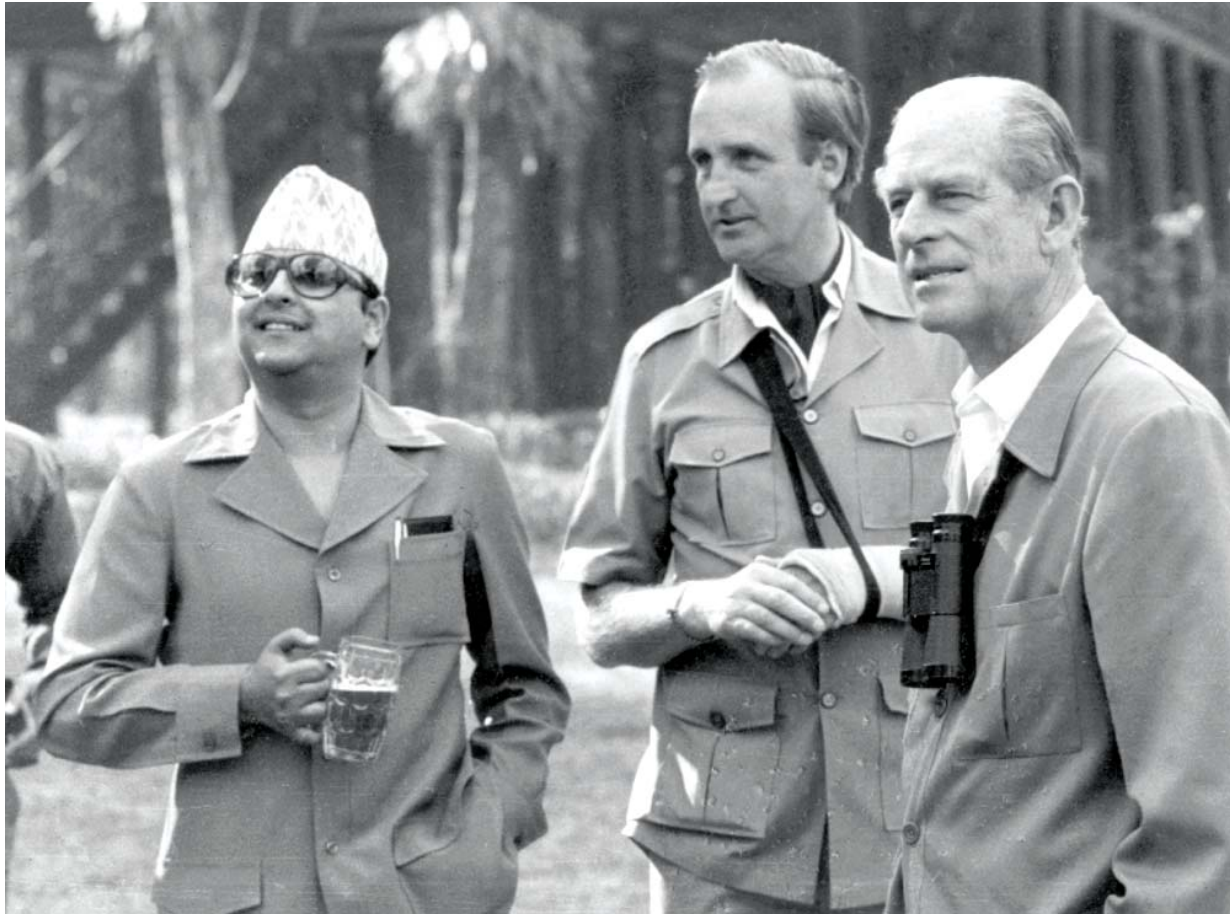
As close associates of Sir Edmund Hillary and collaborators in his yeti expedition activities, a private gathering had been arranged in Kathmandu with the royal guests. Sir Ed and Tenzing Norgay's historic first ascent of Mount Everest on the eve of Elizabeth's coronation on 29 May 1953 had forged a special bond that would last their lifetime.

Just after lunch near Jiri, Konjo Chumbi's wife gave birth to a son. The story goes: 'She went down to the stream for a wash and came back 30 minutes later holding a baby. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, strapped him onto her back and kept walking. They reached Kathmandu just in time to catch the royal couple before they flew off from Kathmandu's Gauchar airport.'

At their meeting with the royal couple, Prince Philip himself opened the car door and took the baby in his arms. He asked the boy's name. "It's up to our lamas," Konjo Chumbi replied. The Duke said, "I've got a name for him. Call him Philip -- after me."

Konjo and his wife agreed, and Prince Philip went on to appoint himself as the godfather. Thus Thukten Phillip Sherpa derived his unique name and royal connection, somehow along the way acquiring double 'l' in the spelling.

As a young man, Thukten spent 15 minutes with his namesake and godfather during their second



PHOTOS: LISA CHOEGYAL

state visit to Nepal in 1986, talking about his career and asking help to become a pilot. Besides his navy career, the Duke was qualified to fly 59 different aircraft.

That came to nothing, but with Sir Ed's guidance Thukten studied forestry in Switzerland, returning to run the family's Asian Trekking in Thamel. A distinguished son of his father, Thukten Phillip was one of five Sherpas to attend Sir Edmund Hillary's funeral in Auckland cathedral, laying white silk khata on the casket in front of the world's television cameras.

Thukten told me this week: "Being a world renowned figure, Prince Philip was a very gentle, soft speaking and positive person. Since 1986 I have not had any opportunity to meet him again. I still have great desire to visit Buckingham Palace and meet some royal family members in my lifetime."

Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh visited Nepal twice, from



26 February to 1 March 1961 and almost exactly 25 later, from 17 to 21 February 1986, both state visits accompanying Queen Elizabeth.

When he died on 9 April 2021 in London aged 99, tributes poured

Prince Philip binocularled and safari-suited with Prince Gyanendra and Jim Edwards (above) during a visit to Chitwan National Park in 1986.

Thukten Phillip Sherpa (left).

in from all corners of the globe to mark his long and much travelled life. Ordinary people shared their stories of "My Day with Prince Philip" and "How I Met the Duke", with repeated refrains remembering his devastating charm, self-assured and friendly demeanour that balanced the beady glare, sharp wit and subversive impatience with protocol.

Perhaps his empathy stemmed from a rootless childhood and lonely school years – he used to sign the visitor's book at country houses with 'of no fixed abode'. Nepali social media also buzzed with personal memories.

A committed conservationist

with a deep interest in nature, Philip and Gyanendra were early eco-warriors and colleagues from World Wildlife Fund (WWF), of which the Duke was founder and the first UK president. During that 1986 visit, he broke away from the main royal program to visit South Asia's first natural world heritage site at Chitwan National Park, and spent a peaceful day amongst the tall grasslands, riverine forests and sal-covered hills of the Tarai jungles.

The press corps arrived ahead of him, lining up politely outside the circular stone and thatched golghar as the two Princes strode into camp after a morning safari exploring the undisturbed wildlife of Chitwan. A retinue of rangers, park staff and security detail followed at a discreet distance.

A chorus of "Good morning, Sir" greeted the Duke as he passed the assembled journalists, their cameras clicking. "It was, until you lot arrived!" I heard him growl out of the side of his mouth, living up to his reputation for irascible one-liners. He was shorter than I expected, but with fine craggy features.

Lists of his best gaffes circulate the internet. My favourite are: "I declare this thing open, whatever it is" (on a visit to Canada in 1969). And "Yak, yak, yak; come on get a move on" (shouted from the deck of Britannia in Belize in 1994 to the Queen who was chatting to her hosts on the quayside).

At Tiger Tops he was gracious to us underlings, but there was some garbled and not very politically correct discussion about catching "some ghastly disease" from monkeys. AIDS was the epidemic of the era. At the British Embassy reception in Kathmandu the next day he was enjoying the locals so much that he failed to join the Ambassador's group photo, to the Queen's resigned irritation.

Then there was the infamous royal hunt as the guest of King Mahendra in 1961 in the lavish Meghali camp in which the Duke diplomatically bandaged his trigger finger so as not to have to shoot any rhinos or tigers – hunters were evolving into conservationists.

Thukten Phillip is weathering the Covid-19 pandemic with his son in Sonoma, the heart of California's wine country. "In 1961, my parents got a picture of Her Majesty the Queen and Prince Philip duly signed hanging in our private chapel in Khumjung, but now I can't find it for a long time back. I am proud of being his godchild, and he had given me his name Phillip when I was only five days old." 🇳🇵

prabhu BANK

Japanese medical aid

Japan and Nepal this week signed a R1.1 billion agreement to upgrade medical equipment in public hospitals, including MRI, CT scan, digital x-ray, and mobile x-ray. The hospitals include: Human Organ Transplant Centre, Patan Hospital, Paropakar Maternity and Women's Hospital, National Trauma Center, Bir



Hospital, Shahid Gangalal National Heart Centre, Manmohan Cardiothoracic Vascular and Transplant Center and Kanti Children's Hospital. The agreement was signed between Japanese ambassador Yutaka Kikuta and Shisir Kumar Dhungana Secretary at the Ministry of Finance.

The JICA project aims to strengthen the diagnosis and treatment systems for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) through procurement of medical equipment for eight advanced public hospitals, thereby contributing to improvement of the quality of medical services in Nepal.

Laxmi Bank's LxBConnect

Laxmi Bank has launched LxBConnect platform for API banking to co-create digital solutions and invited fintechs, startups, developers to be Partners-in-Tech to identify 'best-

LxBCONNECT

fit' APIs. LxBConnect sandbox environment is expected to enable partners to visualise multiple banking use cases and understand possible integrations.

Bajaj in Balkhu

Hansraj Hulaschand, distributor of Bajaj motorcycles in Nepal has inaugurated a new showroom at R S Autohub in



Ballkhu. Bajaj is one of the largest selling automobile brand in Nepal and will use the facility for sale, services and spare parts.



Everest Bank in Damauli

Everest Bank inaugurated its 103rd branch in Damauli of Tanahu on 23 April. Mayor Baikuntha Neupane, and Raju Gauli of Everest Bank jointly opened the branch. The Bank will use QR codes for Contactless Payment System. Everest Bank has a customer base of 1.1 million in Nepal.

MoneyGram teams up with eSewa

MoneyGram International this week teamed up with F1soft Group subsidiary eSewa Money Transfer to enable customers around the globe to send money to family and friends in Nepal directly into the beneficiary's bank account or eSewa wallet. With connectivity to 65 banks the service can deliver funds to accounts directly. With over 4.2 million registered eSewa wallet users in Nepal, the upcoming service to eSewa wallet will be a milestone in Nepal's inbound remittances.

"We're excited about how this partnership builds on our network expansion and further accelerates digital growth

as we expand our customer-centric capabilities," said Naved Ashraf of MoneyGram South Asia. Biswas Dhakal of F1soft Group said, "Teaming up with MoneyGram will help us strengthen our position as the most reliable and competitive choice for international money transfers to Nepal."

Motorola Moto e7

Motorola has launched another model of its e-series franchise, the moto e7 power, in Nepal, devices designed to cater to the Nepal market with new features.

The new moto e7 power has better power and performance with longer battery life for entertainment features on the smartphone.

Global IME 3rd Q profit

Global IME Bank has posted its third quarter balance statement for the current fiscal year, showing a gross profit of Rs3.57 billion, this is 32.4% higher than last year. Last year's per share profit of Rs18.99 has increased this year to Rs22.05. the bank says the healthy growth is due to a digitisation strategy, cost-cutting during the pandemic and other management reforms.





Skin Art

Trendsetting Nepali tattoo artist is a self-made entrepreneur, and an inspiration to many



PHOTOS: NARESH NEWAR

Growing up, Sumina Shrestha always wanted to be an artist but it took the Nepal earthquake six years ago for her to realise her true calling in life.

Already proficient with a paintbrush at 19, Shrestha (*pictured above in her studio last week*) joined a group of artists to help child survivors through art therapy.



MADE IN NEPAL
Naresh Newar

"Travelling across the country and teaching children to paint gave me such a sense of accomplishment," says Shrestha. It helped the artists themselves cope with frequent aftershocks and uncertainty. That is when he met tattoo artists, and the art form immediately fascinated her.

"Every artist goes through a journey trying to explore what is most fulfilling, I had yet to find something that would be both satisfying and sustainable. But I had found my true passion," recalls Shrestha, who subsequently taught herself different tattoo techniques.

With her savings from freelance

painting work, she bought some low-cost tattoo machines and ink. Now all she needed was a human canvas and she had a ready volunteer: her sister.

"It was 2AM when I finished tattooing on her. We were crazy," laughs Shrestha, now 26.

She then started to practice around the clock and kept at it for a year. This helped her gain more confidence, and soon she was ready to take it up as a profession. A close friend then gave her a chance to work in his tattoo studio in Jochhe.

Shrestha took a risk opening her own business called 'Sumina's Tattoo Studio' in Kaladhara neighbourhood near Thamel. Backpacking tourists were her first clients, but the journey wasn't without challenges, and customers were not used to female tattoo artists.

"In the beginning when people visited my studio, they used

to give me a look when they saw me. Most of the tattoo artists are males, which is still the case," says Shrestha.

Her limited experience with running a business did not help. But she found the perfect medium to project her tattoo business: through social media platforms, mainly Instagram.

"We artists are not a social bunch but I learned quickly that



my business would not grow if I don't communicate it well," adds Shrestha.

Over the past five years, Shrestha has done more than 50,000 small and large tattoos. She takes 3-4 clients a day for small designs whereas larger ones take days.

"Making a tattoo on someone's skin is quite different from drawing on paper. People have different skin types and accordingly, it may take longer on some customers," explains Shrestha, who makes tattoo hygiene her top priority. "It's like running a health clinic, we are working on someone's skin and we must be conscious about hygiene."

Shrestha's parents are proud of her success, even though they did not know about her tattoo business until recently. Worried it will add to the family's financial burden, she had kept them in the dark.

Shrestha also wanted to start her studio independently, proving that a woman does not need to rely on anyone to empower herself.

"Every parent should let their children choose their own path, each child is creative and with experience will be motivated to do more," says Shrestha, adding that

her parents, who always encouraged her passion for art had a big hand in her success.

Tattoo is no more only a fashion statement. People tell their stories with ink on skin and associate it with their philosophy, beliefs and spirituality. On the other hand, becoming a tattoo artist is no more frowned upon in Nepal.

Says Shrestha: "I'm happy to see more young female artists taking it up, it is a lot of hard work but as long as you are passionate and focused, this is as good a choice as any." 🇳🇵



Meet Sumina Shrestha in her tattoo studio in Kathmandu, and explain how she drifted to the profession from her art background. She talks about the struggle of being a female tattoo artist, and the importance of believing in oneself and never losing sight of one's goal.



PHOTOS: SONIA AWALE

Managing Everest's waste problem

The goal is to ensure that garbage on the Everest trail does not make headlines anymore

● Alton C Byers

Garbage at Everest base camp has made headlines in the media every spring since the early 1970s. Dozens of 'Everest Clean Up Expeditions' have been launched since then, some legitimate, others a way for climbers to pick up a few tin cans and spend the rest of the season climbing.

More organised efforts of the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC) began 10 years ago. Camp garbage got international media coverage in May of 2019, along with the now-famous and viral photos of Everest climbers waiting in line below the summit.

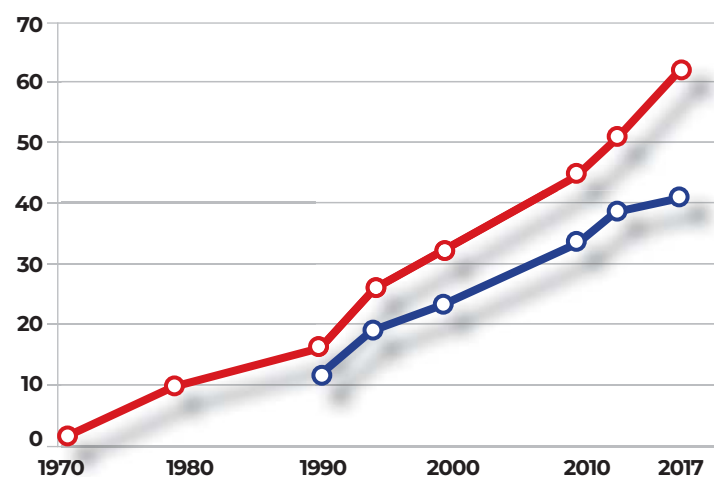
Rarely, however, has the issue of waste management within the villages of Sagarmatha National Park and Buffer Zone (SNPBZ) and trekking routes been part of the international dialogue or concern.

As tourist numbers continued to rise pre-Covid (more than 60,000 in 2019, not counting support staff) unsightly and unhealthy landfills have become a common sight near villages and lodges. A recent study by Sagarmatha Next reported that as of the 2017 sampling season, there were 58 active open landfill pits within the SNPBZ.

Our more recent survey in 2019 suggested that this total has now grown to more than 75 landfills. A 2010 study estimated that 4,173kg per day of solid waste is generated during the peak tourist seasons of October-November and April-May, or 473,550kg over the 90 days. This figure has most likely doubled since the study took place a decade ago, when tourist numbers were half what they are today (Figure 5). If so, more than 1,000 tons of solid waste is generated in the park and buffer zone each tourist year, with nearly all of it ending up landfills.

The growing presence of these landfills poses a serious health

Increasing number of lodges in Namche Bazar and Lukla



and safety concern for humans and livestock alike. In addition of being an eye sore, routine burning of waste, release of toxic chemicals, and contamination of groundwater supplies creates health and environmental problems.

The problem of leaking septic tanks from lodges and landfill seepage have been linked to increased gastrointestinal diseases among tourists and local people. Landfills, burning and burying their content, have become the new norm for a solid waste 'management strategy' in the Khumbu.

Proper solid waste disposal is a common problem all over Nepal's high mountain parks and protected areas, including the Makalu-Barun National Park, Kanchenjunga Conservation Area, and Langtang National Park. Trucking or helicoptering garbage out, are neither feasible nor affordable.

Most solid waste deposited in landfills is composed primarily of tin, steel, or aluminum cans, glass bottles, plastic bottles, and other plastic goods. Electronic waste like batteries, computer parts, and old household appliances are

increasing, as is medical waste in the vicinity of health clinics.

Local lodge owners and waste management organisations have treated these as 'burnable garbage' since around 2010, as other options were either absent or perceived to be too costly. The belief is that once burned, the problem is solved, when in fact the burning catalyses a slew of new health and environmental problems. Additionally, landfills can remain a perpetual source of groundwater contamination for decades, releasing toxic substances particularly during the monsoon.

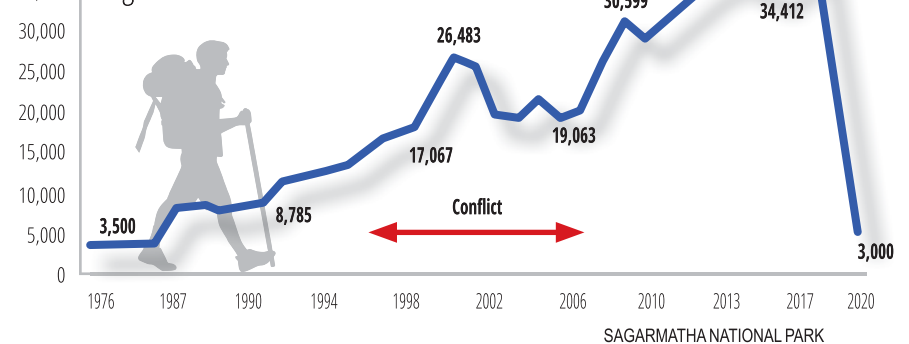
The current system of waste management relies on a 'command-and-control', government laws and agencies to enforce rules (cash deposits from mountaineering expeditions to encourage the return of specified amounts of trash from the mountain).

Current practices are clearly non-sustainable, there are limited options for landfills, and the sheer volumes of garbage now entering the park each year.

In response, the University of Colorado at Boulder and Arizona

Peak Trekking

Non-Nepali visitor arrival at Sagarmatha National Park



State University conducted an interdisciplinary study of the issues involved between July and October, 2019, with the goal of identifying plausible, sustainable solutions to managing the problem of solid waste within the SNPBZ.

After the end of the insurgency in 2006, tourist numbers increased steadily to 30,000 per year in the Khumbu, till 2015 when it once again declined due to the earthquake. From 2016 onward, however, the numbers of annual visitors increase dramatically to the 60,000 per year reported for 2019, only to drop to near zero as of this writing (April 2020) as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Collectively, these patterns of tourist numbers demonstrate how vulnerable international visitation to Nepal can be in the face of national and global events.

As shown in Figure 5, the growth of tourism during the 1990s and 2000s coincided with the building of dozens of new lodges throughout the Khumbu. The combination of increased tourism and lodge numbers also accelerated demands for imported food and

goods, such as wine, whiskey, and hard liquors (glass bottles), beer and soft drinks (aluminum cans), water and soft drinks (plastic bottles), canned food items (tin or steel containers), and shipping and packaging materials.

This was the primary cause of the rather sudden and new accumulations of tons of solid waste in need of some sort of disposal mechanism. The SPCC has been successful in raising awareness and controlling litter along major trails, and within a number of climbing base camps, including the periodic Everest cleanups that receive most global publicity. The SPCC also works closely with Sagarmatha Next, a non-profit focused on sustainable tourism within the park and buffer zone, which is setting up a new interpretation centre at Syangboche that includes exhibits promoting innovative approaches to solid waste management and re-use, in addition to interactive natural and cultural history displays.

Building upon the previous work of the SPCC, Sagarmatha Next and local government departments,



ALTON C BYERS

Metal, glass and plastic waste is transported by yaks to Lukla and loaded into flights flying back to Kathmandu. (left)

An open landfill in the vicinity of Gorak Shep (5,140m) with plastics, metals, and paper waste which is routinely burned and buried when the capacity of the open pit is exceeded



pre-processing. Syangboche is recommended as an initial MRF site since it is centrally located for villages both to the west (Thame) as well as the east (Tengboche).

Some remote villages such as Gorak Shep continue to use yaks and dzopkios for supplies from Namche Bazar. As the yaks usually make the journey to Namche empty, they could be used to transport waste to the MRF in Syangboche.

In October-November, 2019 the SPCC and Sagarmatha Next conducted a pilot test of the Carry Me Back initiative. Tourists and trekking guides carried 1 kg of pre-processed waste from Namche Bazar back to Lukla on a volunteer basis, where it was then transported back to Kathmandu by the airlines. Approximately 2,400 visitors participated in the pilot program, carrying 5,400 'Carry Me Back' bags to Lukla for an estimate 4.5 tons of solid waste removed from the park.

Nepali airline companies have long cooperated with recycling initiatives within the Khumbu by transporting the collected Everest base camp garbage free of cost back to Kathmandu. The use of helicopters returning empty could be explored. Discussions are underway about the construction of a ropeway to deliver food and other

supplies to Namche Bazar to replace mules and yaks. The ropeway could also transport pre-processed solid waste out of the Khumbu and back to Lukla for delivery to recycling facilities in Kathmandu also using a new road that will soon connect Khumbu. The system could be implemented phase wise in Lukla-Namche in the first year, followed by Khumjung-Khunde, Tengboche-Deboche-Pangboche, Dingboche-Chukung-Pheriche-Lobuche-Gorak Shep, Phortse-Dole-Machermo-Gokyo, and in the sixth year, Thamo-Thame-Marlung-Lungdhen.

The approximately 75 open garbage and landfill pits documented by this study do not include the many dozens of older, buried landfills located throughout the park. Since both the active and historic landfills can continue to contaminate freshwater supplies for decades to come, they will ultimately need to be excavated, segregated according to waste type (plastic, aluminum, steel), and integrated into the recycling process established through the steps recommended above.

Due to the pandemic, international adventure tourism to Khumbu and elsewhere in Nepal will probably not occur until spring 2022. While the lack of visitors

impacts the economy, the time could also be used to run a series of pilot projects associated with solid waste and the management plan.

Realistic incentives for lodge owners and other business entities need to be developed if there are any expectations of their active involvement. For example, a Rs10 cash value on aluminum cans, plastic and glass bottles would encourage their collection and delivery to pre-processing and recycling facilities, as opposed to being thrown into a landfill.

The active involvement of the tourist, outdoor retail industry, alpine club, and trekking and mountaineering sectors has already been shown to facilitate success, as in the case of the 'Carry Me Back' initiative. Implementation of the solid waste management plan, if and when it happens, should be carefully monitored. Success in the Khumbu could very well provide working models for other high-use mountain regions of the world, where solutions to effective solid waste management have remained just as elusive for decades. 

The peer reviewed version of this paper by Alton C Byers, Tommy Gustafsson, Milan Shrestha and Netra Chhetri was recently published in Mountain Research and Development, Vol. 4, No. 3, August 2020.

we recommended source segregation, routine collection, establishment of Environmental Stations (ES) and Material Recovery Facilities (MRF) for shredding plastics and crushing aluminum cans. The pre-processed solid waste to Lukla airport, and replicating the system throughout the national park and buffer zone.

A system of daily waste pickup should be developed based upon the particular material, for example Monday for plastics, Tuesday for metals, Wednesday for paper, and Thursday for organic wastes. Fridays and Sundays would be used by the SPCC for work at designated ES and MRF. The waste is then transported by porters to

ONE STOP SOLUTION



PRE PRESS



PRINTING



POST PRESS

विदेशबाट पठाएको रकम सजिलै IME Pay App मा प्राप्त गर्नुहोस् ।





IME Complex, Panipokhari, Kathmandu, Nepal

+977 1 4217600, 4430600 / 4425800 (Fax)

facebook.com/imeremit

info@imeremit.com.np

www.imeremit.com.np

Toll Free : 16600 151515 (For NTC users only)



GET IT ON Google Play

Download on the App Store

There are nearly 2,000 inhabitants of the tent city at Base Camp this spring, crammed with climbers, support staff for expeditions to Everest, Lhotse, Nuptse and Pumori.

Amenities have improved: dining areas with wifi, yoga tents, bathrooms with hot showers, and even Executive Dome Tents with king-size beds and duvet.

● **Monika Deupala**
at Everest Base Camp

Red, yellow, green, colourful tents stand out amidst the brown debris of the Khumbu Glacier as Base Camp grows into a small city 2km long and a population of 2,000 people. It takes more than one hour to walk from one end to the other, across boulders and crumbling ice pinnacles.

This year, there are 42 expeditions with nearly 400 climbers just for Mt Everest. But Base Camp also has more than 100 mountaineers from 11 expeditions attempting Lhotse, 25 climbers headed for Nuptse and ten members of two teams attempting Pumori. Each has retinues of high altitude guides, cooks, dish-washers, and support staff. This is home for many of them for three months till end-May.

Mornings begin with the hiss of pressure cookers and clanking of LPG cylinders from numerous kitchens. There are people making short treks to the toilet tents located beyond the creaking crevasses.

The reason for the crowd this year is that there is a backlog of expeditions from 2020 when climbers had to abandon their attempts as Nepal clamped a lockdown on 25 March. As befitting a small town, Base Camp has cafes with WiFi, wooden floors and heating, tables full of snacks, hot drinks, chips and more. There are hot shower rooms, meeting rooms, charging stations for electronic devices, and even a recreational tent with yoga in the mornings and movies in the evenings.

“Base Camp life has improved significantly, with helicopter delivering fresh food directly from Kathmandu,” says expedition leader Garrett Madison of Madison Mountaineering. “We used to keep meat frozen on the glacier even ten years ago. Now we can make video calls to family, and this helps not missing home a lot.”

Helicopters with more than 600kg cargo ferry the loads only up to Gorakshep, and are not allowed to Base Camp. From there, porters and yaks carry expedition gear and other items to Base Camp.

The outfitter Climbing the Seven Summits has spacious Executive Dome Tents with large windows overlooking the Khumbu Icefall, king-size beds with down duvet, pillows, easy chairs and coffee machines. This is like climbing Everest ‘business class’, and it has been ridiculed on social media. But the company’s Mike Hamill justifies it saying that there is enough roughing it on the mountain, and some climbers who can afford it want creature comforts at Base Camp.

Even before dawn there is activity at Base Camp as climbers and their guides head up the Icefall to Camp I on the Western Cwm. They want to cross the most dangerous parts before the sun comes up and increases avalanche danger.

By the time the sun comes up from behind Everest’s west shoulder, expedition tents come alive. The Bahraini Everest Team was here first in late February, and located its camp farthest up the glacier.

In the expedition tent, the cook is busy all day preparing three meals. As soon as breakfast is finished, it is time to work on



lunch and then dinner. Western climbers need carbs, but do not like dal bhat, so there is pasta, meat and chocolate desserts.

It does not take long for the first of many helicopter flights to arrive, bringing essential supplies and evacuating climbers with altitude sickness or other ailments. Four climbers have already been evacuated, and three of them have tested positive for Covid-19 in hospital in Kathmandu. Covid-19 attacks the respiratory system, and symptoms are similar to acute mountain sickness, with one exacerbating the other.

The second lockdown in Kathmandu has cast uncertainty over the season, as reports come in of a massive surge in new cases and fatalities in various parts of Nepal. There are rumours of new cases at Base Camp itself, but news is under wraps.

High altitude guide Ang Phurba Sherpa is nervous about the pandemic resurgence since it may jeopardise his earnings for another year. But for now, he is happy that the expeditions are back in the Khumbu.

“Expedition months are earning months for most of us who depend on mountaineering business, and last year was a washout,” he says. “It is a dangerous job, but it is our profession. We try to go up and down the Icefall at night to reduce the risk. This is the life of a Sherpa.” 🇳🇵



Everest City

Everest is more crowded
any time in climbing history



PHOTOS: MONIKA DEUPALA

Annapurna Dhaulagiri double-take

The Nepal Himalaya has seen a spurt in expeditions this spring, large because of the backlog of the past years, and possibly because of the global publicity generated by the ‘traffic jam’ photographs of 2019. Climbing on Everest, for instance, was affected in 2014 and 2015 due to the Icefall avalanche and earthquakes, 2016 was slow because of the lingering impact of the blockade. And 2020 was a wipeout because of the pandemic.

There is a record-breaking 42 expeditions with nearly 400 foreign climbers on Everest. But while Everest gets all the attention, there have also been 44 climbers on four expeditions on the north face of Annapurna I, and many of them are doing it in tandem with Dhaulagiri which has five expeditions with 35 members.

Many of them started early in the season on Annapurna and have now moved on to Dhaulagiri to climb it before the monsoon arrived. There has also been the same siege-style commercial climbing of the two eight-thousanders that is more reminiscent of Everest, with guides moving up first to fix ropes and taking clients up the mountain.

In fact, there were so many relatively inexperienced climbers this year on Annapurna that even easier sections had to be fixed, which meant that the lead team ran out of rope high on the mountain. The expedition then radioed for a helicopter that dropped rope, oxygen, food and other supplies at nearly 7,000m on the north face of Annapurna. A helicopter also lifted a Taiwanese climber suffering frost-bite from Camp III to Base Camp.

This use of helicopters has led to more criticism about the over-commercialisation of Himalayan mountaineering, and some climbing bloggers have contrasted it with the pure pioneering adventure of the French expedition of 1950 on Annapurna. But it was also this that allowed 68 people to summit the 8,091m peak by 16 April without a single fatality—all the more remarkable because there was not a single fatality on a mountain that has the highest ratio (32%) of deaths. Of the 68, 14 were women, and among them six were Nepali.

It helps that Dhaulagiri is just across the Kali Gandaki Valley and so close to Annapurna that climbers just moved across for the second climb. Most Annapurna summiteers, including the six Nepali women, are also on Dhaulagiri, where fresh snow had delayed climbing till early this week.

While most of them, including 82-year-old Carlos Soria, are on the easier north ridge route, there are some veteran climbers attempting the never-climbed northwest spur of Dhaulagiri which at 8,167m is the world’s seventh highest mountain. Many of the climbers on the northwest ridge have tried to get to the top on this route several times in the past. 🇳🇵



CLIMBING THE SEVEN SUMMITS (ABOVE AND BELOW)



ONLINE EVENTS

Learn French

Consider learning a new language in the free time at home. Join Alliance Française Kathmandu's 6-week long beginner French language classes. Get details on Facebook 3 May onwards, Fee: Rs9,900



Kimff 2021 submissions

Fill in the Kimff 2021 entry form and send relevant films produced after 1 January 2019. Go to their website for more details. Deadline: 1 September

Poetry webinar

Listen to the winners of the second poetry writing contest organised by Daya Foundation and Rotary Club of Kathmandu Mid-town as they recite their poetry in a Zoom webinar. The theme of the contest was 'Expressing Identity & Culture'. 8 May, 4pm



Painting Contest

Sushila Arts Academy has collaborated with the Alexander Neveski School for a painting competition titled 'World Without War'. Participants must send in a photo of their artwork to nepal@rs.gov.ru Submission deadline: 7 May

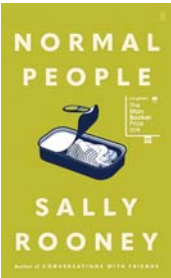
Global Youth Dialogue

AIESEC's Global Youth Dialogue is an online space for young people from countries across the world to connect and participate in discourse and share cross-cultural experiences. Get details from AIESEC Nepal's Facebook page 5-9 May

ISOLATION READING

Normal People

Sally Rooney's sophomore novel Normal People is an achingly beautiful love story of young couple Connell and Marianne that tackles friendship, first loves, and mental health.



Mindhunter

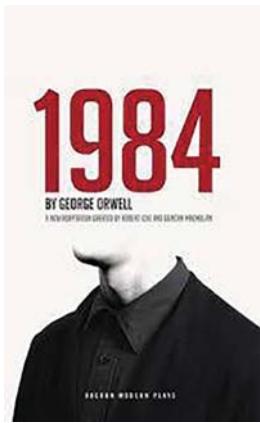
Criminal profiler John Douglas' behind-the-scenes account of his career at the FBI's elite Serial Crimes Unit that inspired a widely popular tv series is a worthy undertaking for readers of true crime.

Kara

Set in Biratnagar Jail, Kara— authored by Nepal's first female Supreme Court Chief Justice Sushila Karki documents a history of oppression faced by Nepali women, and the political circumstances that led to women being branded criminals.

Fragile Mountains

M.K. Limbu's collection of multiple love stories set in Nepal is an ode to our country, and the hundreds of crisscrossing loves and fates that exist within.



Nineteen Eighty-Four

George Orwell's foresightful dystopian science fiction novel published in 1949 takes place in an imagined totalitarian future in the year 1984, and explores war, propaganda and mass surveillance.

VIRTUAL TOURS

MoNA Art Exhibition

Take a virtual tour of the Museum of Nepali Arts with its 360° virtual contemporary art exhibition Inception featuring 19 prominent artists and their work under the lockdown in 2020.



The world at home

Travel may be limited these days, but discovering incredible experiences from across the globe doesn't have to be. Get your Guide's The world at home initiative brings some of their top tours, activities, and attractions to you online. Find everything on YouTube.

Virtual street festivals

Google's Colorful Street Fests & Carnivals is a virtual tour of eight of the most vibrant street festivals in the world. The celebrations include the La Tomatina food fight in Spain, Oktoberfest in Germany, and the Mardi Gras in New Orleans.



Amazing Libraries

Take a virtual trip to 11 historic and beautiful libraries around the world through the Amazing Libraries Google Earth tour, including the New York Public Library, Klementinum in the Czech Republic and Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt.

Underwater tour

Take Google's Life in the ocean deep underwater tour and discover the mysteries of the sea with Sir David Attenborough. Watch videos and underwater maps, and learn about the unique creatures that inhabit the world's oceans from countries like Russia, Sweden, and Canada, to the Netherlands.

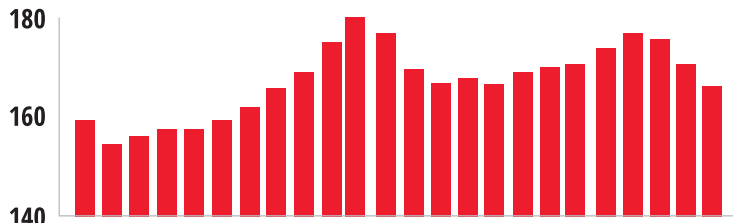


We are now getting into the pre-monsoon season, and will be seeing the first of a series of afternoon and evening thunderstorms along the Himalayan foothills. As the temperature in the Indo-Gangetic plains hits 40 Celsius, moisture will be sucked up and the updrafts will start forming large storm cells into Friday and the weekend. Snowfall is likely along higher valleys, while Kathmandu Valley could see bright mornings and passing storms towards evening. Maximum temperature in the valley will dip to 2 degrees below normal, in the comfortable mid-20s.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
26° 16°	24° 14°	25° 15°

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 13 - 29 April



Major cities including Kathmandu are under another lockdown for the next 15 days to contain Covid-19. The first day of the shutdown was not enough to clean the air as we seen in the graph above. This is because there are still wildfires across the country. All morning, the concentration of pollutants remained in the red 'Unhealthy' zone. But pre-monsoon showers are forecast into the weekend, which might wash down the pollution somewhat. Go out if you must, but be masked and use a sanitiser. Definitely avoid crowds.

OUR PICK



Acclaimed filmmaker Wong Kar-wai's 1994 film *Chungking Express* tells two sequential stories about two policemen in Hong Kong dealing with recently ended relationships. In the first story, policeman 223 is holding out hope for his estranged girlfriend May to reconcile with him when he encounters a mysterious woman at a bar. The second story follows policeman 663, whose flight attendant girlfriend has just left him when he meets Faye, a new employee at the fast food store he frequents. Stars Takeshi Kaneshiro, Brigitte Lin, Tony Leung, Faye Wong, and Chan Kam-Chuen.

HOME DINING



Momo

Having a momo party while stuck at home might be a great way to spend an afternoon. Round up available ingredients, divide the prep work and make it a family event. Find dozens of video tutorials on how to start.

Tama ko achar

There must be few Nepali households that don't have tama at hand. Pair it with mustard oil and seeds, dried chilli, garlic, and available household spices to make some zingy tama ko achar. Get instructions online.



Lemonade

There is no greater time than the stifling summer to enjoy a refreshing glass of lemonade -- and not the easy peasy lemon squeeze kind. The Stay at Home Chef on YouTube has a simple-to-follow and easy-to-make guide to making real lemonade.

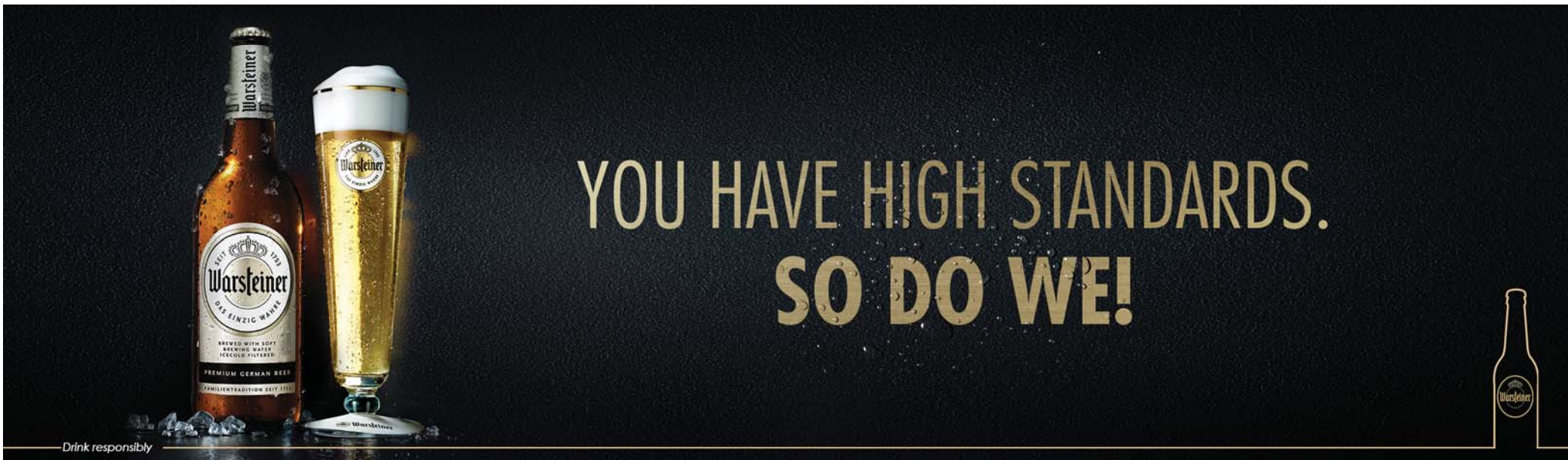


Chatpate

As the streets go silent during the lockdown, bring the flavour of Nepal's street food home. Whip up some chatpate for a quick and easy snack. Find instructions online or play with the ingredients and give it a fresh new spin.

Kurauni

Also called khuwa, this creamy dessert requires nothing more than boiling milk. Just be prepared to do a whole lot of stirring. One litre of milk makes about 200 grams of kurauni. Enjoy it as is, or look up how to use it to make other delicious Nepali dessert items.



“Our health system can’t contain the pandemic”

Health Minister Hridayesh Tripathi blames middlemen for the delay in vaccine procurement, says it is up to the public how long the lockdown will last.

Active cases in Nepal have soared to over 30,000, from approximately 600 in February, 5% of those infected have been requiring hospital admissions.

Hospitals in major cities are already starting to feel the pressure. Nepal has a total of 18,917 general beds, 1,486 ICUs and 634 ventilators.

Tripathi in an interview with *Nepali Times* on Wednesday warned that our health system cannot contain the pandemic at the rate people are getting infected.

Excerpts:

Nepali Times: Covid-19 patients are not getting hospital beds. How often do you get calls from people asking you for help?

Hridayesh Tripathi: The second wave is more contagious and lethal, often times symptoms appear towards the end when patients require ICU or ventilator support. As a result, there is higher demand. We have increased the number of beds but they are still not enough. This is the case also in the world’s most developed countries.

We are already working on our plan to build 5-15 beds capacity hospitals in each municipality. We are the first in South Asia to adopt such an ambitious program.

The decision to connect 2,000 HDUs (High Dependency Units with oxygen) across the country with 50 beds in each province have fallen by the wayside, however.

The ministry has already completed all the procedures and distributed 2,000 HDU connections. It has been installed successfully in few areas but for the most part, it has not happened due to negligence and delay.

You warned that cases will peak in July in Nepal. At the rate people are getting infected, will our infrastructure be enough?

We might be reporting 11,000 new cases a day by July. But our health system is already saturated.

When I made that point based on the projections by the ministry and WHO, I was ridiculed, some joked that I should become an astrologer, and others accused me of fear-mongering. At the time new variants had not even been identified in Nepal. This is to say that the total infections might be more than what we forecast previously.

You pointed to the need for vigilance before New Year. District administration offices have just started to enforce restrictions. Why it was not implemented on time?

Our effort has been on not to impose nationwide lockdown if possible taking into account its impact on our economy. We tried



SANTA GAHA MAGAR

to find an alternative but the public didn’t take the latest surge seriously despite the government’s repeated appeal to follow safety measures.

Both political parties and communities are responsible for the second wave. I request everyone to adhere to health standards.

Why did the government then impose a lockdown for 15 days?

If the number of active cases in hill and mountain districts exceed 200 and 500 in urban centres, the Chief District Officer may issue a restraining order in those areas on the recommendation of the District Covid-19 Crisis Management Center (DCMC).

It takes at least 10 to 14 days to break the chain of the infection, which is why we have placed prohibitory order for two weeks.

Will we have lockdown for an extended period like last year?

Not if everyone follows the order. But if people neglect it, I can’t say how long it will last.

What has the government done to prevent rapid community spread as it happened last year when Nepali migrants from India returned home?

We have arranged to send returnee Nepalis home after antigen tests. Foreign nationals must have a negative PCT test to enter Nepal either via road or air. Everyone must quarantine.

We have received over 3 million doses of vaccines from India and China. One million doses of Covidshield from Serum Institute of India that you paid for haven’t arrived. What is holding things up?

Only a small number of vaccines have been approved for use and we lack storage infrastructure for some of those shots. So we have limited options and the Department of Drug Administration has approved some vaccines accordingly. After the initial donation from India, we even bought 2 million doses of Covishield from the Serum Institute.

We then offered to buy 5 million more. But the local agent here in Nepal of the manufacturing company asked for 10% in

commission, forcing us to step back. The involvement of middlemen, who were also present when we bought the vaccine for \$4 per dose complicated the procurement for 27 days. By then, infections began to soar in India and there were restrictions on export.

If so, will everyone who received the first dose also get their second within the prescribed period?

People are getting a second dose. Everyone who got the first one will also receive the booster shot.

We have used all the options

to bring the vaccine. We even asked the private sector but no one applied. The government has decided to approve no more than 10% profit for importers, which seems to have demotivated them.

We have also approved the Sputnik V vaccine and the Russian government is manufacturing vaccines in Nepal with selected private companies.

The British Ambassador has committed to providing additional 2 million doses to Nepal. The US ambassador gave us his word that he will also help with the vaccine.

Of the 14.8 million doses we pledged under the WHO’s COVAX initiative, we have received only 348,000 doses. Vaccines may seem like a health and commercial product, but, fundamentally, we are at the mercy of vaccine politics.

What about the availability of oxygen?

Patients of the new variant require three times more oxygen than those infected by the original strain. But we should be more concerned about cylinders than oxygen because they are occupied as long as patients are undergoing treatment. We are planning to buy 40,000 cylinders, and are talking with the UAE and the Korean ambassadors.

Who should people struggling with lack of hospital beds contact?

Kathmandu has the infrastructure, treatment won’t be a problem as of now. We can’t say the same for Nepalganj. I also see challenges in Birganj.

We are working tirelessly to develop the infrastructure required, which is why we are building hospitals with HDUs in all municipalities. We have already deployed skilled human resources and budget across the country. We are evaluating the situation as the second wave spreads.

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

फोन: नं. १०९८ मा खबर गरौ ।



नेपाल सरकार

सञ्चार तथा सूचना प्रविधि मन्त्रालय

सूचना तथा प्रसारण विभाग



Panchakanya Bhawan, Krishna Galli, Lalitpur • Toll Free No. 1660-01-70007 • www.panchakanya.com



MOFA

SCREENETIME: Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali addresses the opening ceremony of the ninth Nepal Africa Film Festival on 23 April in Kathmandu.



INDIAN EMBASSY

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR: The Indian embassy gifted ambulances equipped with ventilators, ECG, oxygen monitor and other emergency medical equipment to Nepal last week.



AMIT MACHAMASI

LOCKDOWN 2.0: A commuter carrying three cylinders of LPG in Kathmandu on the first day of lockdown imposed to curb the latest surge in Covid-19 cases.



CHANDRAKALA CHHETI/RSS

HIGH ON DEMAND: People line up for the Covid vaccine at Nidaan Hospital in Pulchok on Wednesday.



GERMAN EMBASSY

WATER FOR ALL: Govinda Memorial Trust receives Rs2.19 million grant from the German Embassy for clean drinking water in Dhading's Gangajamuna municipality.

Laptops for lockdowns

Shopping 101 for Zoom zombies as we enter Lockdown 3.0

In 2020 the acronym WFH (Work from Home) entered the vocabulary. Since then, our second-best lockdown buddy has been our trusty laptop. Can you guess what is your first? Hint: it fits in your palm.



TECH-AWAY
Saniaa Shah

School children, college students and office-going grown-ups all need laptops to stay connected, attend class or meetings, and spend time learning or working on something all day.

Before searching for the perfect laptop model, you might want to focus on what is more important: understanding your options and making an informed buying choice. Let me hit 'Enter':

Lenovo – The Ambitious One

The Chinese Lenovo beat reputed names like HP to become the leading PC brand in India. It has a reputation for making a solid device that delivers good performance. There are various lines of Lenovo laptops available in Nepal, each one appropriate for a slightly different audience. The Ideapad series is affordable, decent without superior specs and good for those who need it for heavy web browsing, writing, using some software applications and watching video content. The Ideapad S145 is a great example of a budget laptop that checks all the boxes.

The Lenovo Flex series is defined by its two-in-one style of working as both a laptop and a tablet. Slim yet strong, these are great for artistic types looking to draw on their device screen. The popular Yoga series is the most flexible with 360-degree hinges, a touch screen and a Halo keyboard that makes the laptop efficient as well as something of an arm candy. For a fast, good-looking yet quality investment, consider the Lenovo Yoga C940 which will survive into the post-pandemic era as well.



For business people looking for a less-talk-more-work machine, the ThinkPad series is your go-to partner. With T series (for the typical worker bee who is also the boss), X series (PC-level performance with portability) and E series (for agile and free-wheeling startup founders) within the ThinkPad range, Lenovo's got something for every kind of business user.

The X1 Carbon Gen 8 is a great flagship business laptop that prioritises function over design. If you are looking to upgrade to a durable device for work, and most of your work happens from your computer, it is worth saving up for.

Asus – The Creative Type

Asus is a Taiwanese company that has quickly risen to become the fifth-largest PC vendor worldwide.

Moving past its gaming series, the Asus VivoBook collection is the best choice if you are looking to buy a budget business laptop (try the VivoBook X409JA). It is commute-friendly, which may



not be the priority right now given the pandemic, but since it is light for the arms as well as on the wallet, it is a practical purchase for the budget-conscious Nepali.

For double the budget, consider the ZenBook series, a great Ultrabook for everyday use. The Asus ZenBook 14 is a world record-breaking super-slim laptop with excellent battery life, awesome graphics cards, an aluminum chassis and an innovative lifted keyboard for higher efficiency typing.

Acer – The Budget Beast

Acer is a veteran manufacturer that impressively ranks third in global laptop sales. Aggressively priced and often armed with just enough features to grab the buyer's attention, Acer's prime audience is students of all ages, sponsored by their parents who want to buy them a sturdy laptop packed with all the necessities, no bells and whistles required. The Acer Aspire series understands its target group well, hitting a balance between technical strength and competitive price.

The Acer Spin series is the dark



horse of this make: an all-rounder affordable laptop that is best suited to students and teachers who log into Zoom for classes on weekdays and enjoy watching movies on their small screen on weekends. An Intel core processor, touchscreen display with full HD, a 2-in-1 stylish foldable body, a quality webcam and ample storage space together make it an underrated performer for sure.

The Acer Swift series (the Swift 3 is a popular choice) is another range made for MS-suite and Internet users, but with less than par battery, a heavier device and no touchscreen. The only upside to the Swift series laptops is the considerably better, comfortable keyboard and smooth, precise touchpad.

However, users have complained about keyboard issues, chipset quality and small repairs that suggest below-average parts. That said, durability is a question that can only be solved with time, and even the most reputed brands come with hardware hiccups.

Dell – The Classic Choice

An American company that has major market control in Asia, Dell is the most widely distributed



laptop in Nepal for sure, with most corporates buying it from the authorised seller Neoteric Nepal, which also offers warranty that leans on its robust after-sales service in Kathmandu. Dell has never been for a trendy audience that cares about looks and colours more than performance and durability. The practical, professional manufacturer makes this clear with the budget-friendly Dell Vostro series and the constantly updated, vast range of models in the Inspiron series.

Both these collections sport a bright display quality, easy keyboard, excellent trackpad and solid internals (powered by Intel and with plenty of RAM and HDD). Inspiron models (look up Inspiron 7391) even come with a 4K display and an impressive 10th gen Intel core.

Test Dell's superior power, sleekness and design with the Dell XPS series—a premium range that flaunts some of the best Ultrabooks around. The XPS gives the Apple Macbook a run for its money, with its competitive specs, powerful processor and desirable looks - making it the ultimate beauty with brains (exhibit A: Dell XPS 13 9300).

Good for indoors, outdoors, desk-based as well as on the move: you can safely close your eyes and pick any Dell XPS - you won't go wrong with this series. That said, the pricing of this best-in-class series is not for the fainthearted, at times costing more than an Apple. Still, Dell is like that old friend who, year after year, sticks around and supports you.

Apple – The Queen of Hearts

The showstopper of this laptop list is obviously the Apple MacBook, a line of laptops that is unlike any other when it comes to beauty, efficiency and simplicity. Apple has earned its position at the top, past Microsoft, HP and other computer giants, all because of its consistent efforts in research, design and innovation in the product development process.

The MacBook Air wins on all fronts: ultra-slim, featherlight body, amazing display quality, impressive battery life and strong security systems. Naturally, a MacBook does require saving up



beforehand, but it will last you for years, saving you time and money you may otherwise end up spend repairing bugs or replacing parts on a Microsoft-based device. The 13.3-inch Retina display of a MacBook Air is worth the downgrade from a larger 15.5 inch offered by any other brand, thanks to True Tone technology and great screen resolution.

MacBook Pro is for working professionals who can maximise productivity and save time with the Magic keyboard, massive storage upgrade (bye bye, external hard disk) and Touch Bar with quick shortcuts that can help you achieve more, saving valuable time for fun stuff like Netflix and FaceTime with friends and family.

Stay safe, stay remote and stay savvy! 🇳🇵



● **Alisha Sijapati** in New Delhi

Amar Tiruva and his wife Radha have been living in Goa for the past ten years. They have an 11-year-old daughter, Antara.

The family was happy in the former Portuguese enclave, with a comfortable job in the tourism industry. Although they had been feeling the impact of the pandemic, everything changed two weeks ago.

Both Amar and Radha, who are in their thirties, tested positive for Covid-19. As their condition worsened, the couple was admitted to Goa Medical College for treatment, and social workers from a neighbourhood church look after Antara.

On 24 April, Radha succumbed to the virus, and Amar's condition is getting worse. He is unconscious in a ventilator, unaware that his wife has died. It took three days for volunteers to cremate Radha's body because of the long queue.

Antara has been told that her mother did not make it, and is distraught. Amar's 80-year-old mother in Nepal's Kailali district is herself not in good health. She prays for her son's recovery, and feels helpless so far away. Amar's maternal uncle Kamal is in Mumbai, but cannot go to Goa because of the travel restrictions.

The Tiruva family's struggle and tragedy is just a drop in India's vast ocean of grief as the Subcontinent is engulfed in the Covid-19 second wave. India is recording more than 300,000 new cases every day for the past five days, and the official death toll this week exceeded 200,000. However, public health experts say these figures are a gross underestimation.

There are an estimated 3 million Nepalis working all over India, but the number could be higher since no records are kept of seasonal migrants. Officially, 40 Nepalis have died in the second Covid-19 wave in India, with 100 hospitalised, but that number is certainly much higher.

The Nepal Embassy in New Delhi has been inundated with calls for help, but has been able to do little more than issue a statement asking Nepalis in India to observe all health precautions since the hospitals are all full. Ambassador Nilambar Acharya says he has also been lobbying with the Indian government to lift the export ban on the Covishield vaccine manufactured by Serum Institute of India.

India gifted Nepal 1 million doses, and Nepal paid for 2 million more doses, but only half the doses arrived before India diverted its vaccines to address its domestic emergency. Ambassador Acharya said, "the Indian government has assured us that it will put Nepal on a

priority for vaccines."

RB Khadka of the Akhil Bharat-Nepali Ekata Manch maintains a network of Nepalis all over India, and had been helping those in need last year. But he says the scale of the crisis this year is too big to handle. He says with the shortage of hospital beds, oxygen supply for Indians, there is little hope for Nepalis, particularly migrant labourers.

"I am getting calls day and night from desperate Nepalis asking if I can arrange an oxygen cylinder, a hospital bed or for remdesivir, I have lost hope and I cannot lie to them anymore and say I will try to help," Khadka told Nepali Times.

Hari Raila ran a small eatery in Delhi's Paharganj neighbourhood. His conditions had been getting steadily worse, and he was being transported by ambulance to Nepal but died on the way in Uttar Pradesh's Muradabad as he struggled to breathe.

All this week, relatives of another Nepali, Bishnu Paudyal, had been trying unsuccessfully to get him admitted to a hospital in the suburbs like Guragaon, Ghaziabad and Faridabad. But he couldn't get a bed, and died from lack of oxygen in his blood.

Some Nepalis like Raila are even being taken to Nepal, in the belief that things are better there. Others have been heading to hospitals as far as Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. But private hospitals charge as much as INR500,000 to INR2million to admit patients. Ambulances charge INR15,000 to take patients to hospital, and few Nepalis can afford that. Remdesivir is selling for Rs20,000 per dose.

From Mumbai, Kamal Tiruva says he would like to take his nephew back to Nepal from Goa, but knows it is impossible.

On 26 April, the New Delhi-based South Asian University issued a notice to all students to evacuate its hostel. Some Nepali students have nowhere to go, and have stayed on despite having tested positive.

"Although the University has issued a notice, there is nowhere to go," says Bipin Ghimire, a PhD student of International Relations, who says hospitals turned back students who were sick. "We saw patients in stretchers waiting in the corridors, doctors were attending to them outdoors."

Ghimire continues to self-quarantine in the hostel itself, but Makan Tamang along with three other Nepali students decided to travel to Nepal via Gorakhpur because one way air tickets now cost Rs50,000.

"I am happy that I am going home," Tamang, who is from Melamchi, says, "but I am worried about what will happen at the border."

Suresh Raj Neupane has been in New Delhi for the past three years as

India's Covid catastrophe hits Nepalis hard



Amar Tiruva, his wife Radha and daughter have been living in Goa for the past ten years. Radha died of Covid-19 last week, and amar is in ventilator.

Court's ruling to assist Nepali workers in India," says Neupane, who has been covering the plight of Nepalis here. "India is actually the biggest source of remittances for Nepal, with workers sending home Rs130 billion a year."

The Nepal Embassy in India has assured Nepalis that those with the Aadhar identity card and a permanent address in India are eligible for the vaccines, but many Nepali labourers say they have been denied vaccines due to the lack of documents.

Anoo Bhuyan, health reporter of the portal India Spend who has been reporting on the Covid-19 second wave, says, "What has happened in India is a humanitarian crisis and the government of India should have been more proactive and accountable of their actions in curbing down the virus."

She says that since the lockdown, all the vaccination centres have been shut and while the government has

pledged to roll out vaccines for those under 45 by 1 May, it has been trying to hide the fact that there is a shortage of vaccines, as well as oxygen cylinders and other medical supplies.

Despite India's shortage, the Nepal government has asked the Indian government to also lift a ban on export of liquid oxygen which some Nepali private importers rely on to fill cylinders.

"Nepal and India have a very special relationship and the border is open, we have to help each other, and we will continue to do so in a time of such a catastrophe," Acharya told Nepali Times.

The Nepal Embassy has urged the Indian government to provide the same facilities as Indian citizens for Nepalis workers here for vaccines, tests and treatment.

The former chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Omar Abdullah told Nepali Times he will be asking in his constituency about Nepalis in Kashmir and Ladakh who are in need of help. He added, "We have been getting SOS from Kashmir, and we will reach out to those who need assistance." 🇳🇵

अब इन्टरनेट अनुभव हुन्छ अमक उत्कृष्ट

5G+

DUAL BAND ROUTER को साथमा

20 Mbps

@ JUST **RS. 1100*** PER MONTH

30 + Mbps FULL HD PACKAGE

@ JUST **RS. 1208*** PER MONTH

High Speed Internet

Smooth Gaming

Quality Video Streaming

Seamless Connection

CONTACT DETAILS FOR SALES & SUPPORT

HEAD OFFICE • Baluwatar: 01-4235888, 9801235888

Email: consumer.sales@subisu.net.np, support@subisu.net.np

Website: www.subisu.net.np

FOR SMS BOOKING: Type Your Name<Space> Location and send SMS to 9801116552

Missing the plot in the prime

The Prime Minister's Employment Program is not generating jobs when it is most needed during this Covid crisis

● **Ramu Sapkota and Upasana Khadka**

For most Nepalis, the economic crisis brought on by the pandemic far outweighs its health risks. A majority of Nepal's population is employed in the informal sector and cannot work remotely and has no social safety net.

With many parts of the country going into another lockdown this week, any hope of employment recovery has further evaporated.

Last year's budget set an ambitious target of creating 700,000 jobs, and raised public expectation. Some 200,000 of these jobs were to be created through the Prime Minister's Employment Program (PMEP), a social protection scheme launched amidst much fanfare in February 2019 guaranteeing 100 days of employment.

A total of 752,976 people registered themselves as unemployed in the past year, but



UPASANA KHADKA

only 78,678 of them landed jobs for a combined 843,042 days so far this fiscal year. This translates into an average of 11 days of employment each. Even if we take underreporting into account, the numbers severely fall short of what was guaranteed. In the first two years of the program, average of 13 and 16 days of work was provided.

"We raised public expectations with this scheme but the number of jobseekers overwhelmingly exceeds the total jobs available. There is room for improvement here," says Ganesh KC, Mayor of Madhuwan Municipality in Bardia, adding that the program has brought some financial relief and aided in infrastructure.

Employment Coordinators (ECs) in charge of PMEP implementation at municipalities have to deal with expectant applicants and local representatives. Says one of them: "Job seekers are tired of filling out the forms year after year with no results. This has put a dent on our credibility."

Suman Ghimire, Joint Secretary at Labour Ministry and National Pprogram Coordinator of PMEP shares the lack of ownership at local levels has been a challenge for PMEP implementation.

"There is a lack of understanding among local officials about the PMEP, they

need to be more proactive, so implementation can happen at the ward level," Ghimire says.

This discrepancy in local ownership is evident in a recently released PMEP 2019-2020 report, according to which only 541,495 out of 753 local units managed to implement the proposed projects. Only 39 local governments provided jobs to over 500 individuals.

So far this year, over 10,000 PMEP projects have been implemented across the country, up from 4,302 last year, about half of which are on roads and transportation. Applicants who are shortlisted are asked to form a group and coordinate with the ward on a pre-approved project they want to work on.

One challenge to PMEP implementation is that the allocated budget can be spent only on wages, and not on equipment. "If it is a road project, for example, they need cement, shovels and safety gear. Who will provide that?" questions Bishaksen Dhakal, Chief Administrative Officer at Sindhuli's Kalamai municipality.

He adds: "In an ideal scenario, the local government's budget would be used to cover material and equipment costs, but there is not much enthusiasm about this at the local leadership level."

The PMEP budget is also released much later than the fiscal allotment, leading to unwillingness



Mindful of migrants' mental

On 20 January, Prabhu Nath Teli in Kapilvastu got a call from a co-worker of his 24-year-old son Suresh in Malaysia. The two had worked together at a textile factory for the past three years.

He was told Suresh had been seriously injured after jumping off the first floor of his hostel because he was distraught about not being able to come home. Suresh had a severe spinal injury.

"My son wanted to come home but his employer was not willing to let him return," says Prabhu, adding that the supervisor had called the police. "This scared Suresh and he attempted to escape by jumping off his room."

Suresh had a history of mental health problems, and was further stressed because of his employer not letting him go home.

"He was responding well to treatment for depression. He got better over the years and was doing well in Malaysia," recalls Prabhu. "But not being able to return home was a trigger, and his mental health problems re-emerged."

Jay Kumar Teli, Suresh's uncle, who was in Kathmandu to help with his nephew's repatriation and recovery, questions how the Malaysian employer could keep hard-working migrants against their will. "Their workers are human beings with personal problems and obligations, not disposable commodities," he says.

But Suresh is not an isolated case. "The ban on the recruitment of new foreign workers in Malaysia due to Covid-19 means employers are unwilling to let their workers leave," explains



Suresh Teli being wheeled out of the international terminal on 23 April.

UPASANA KHADKA



Suresh Teli and his father Purna Teli at Kathmandu Airport.



Suresh with his mother at the Trauma Center in Kathmandu.

JAY KUMAR TELI

Deepak Dhakal, Labour Counsellor at the Nepal Embassy.

Increased workload due to labour shortages, pressure from families back home for financial support and strains in transnational relationships take a psychological toll on workers.

"Mental health issues among migrants who face pressure from both the employers and families back home are rampant and need to be systematically addressed," says Prakash Panthi, Labour Attache at the Nepal Embassy in Malaysia.

Following his fall, Suresh received care in the orthopaedic ward of a Malaysian hospital for his spinal injury and was kept under psychiatric observation before being

transferred to a nursing home.

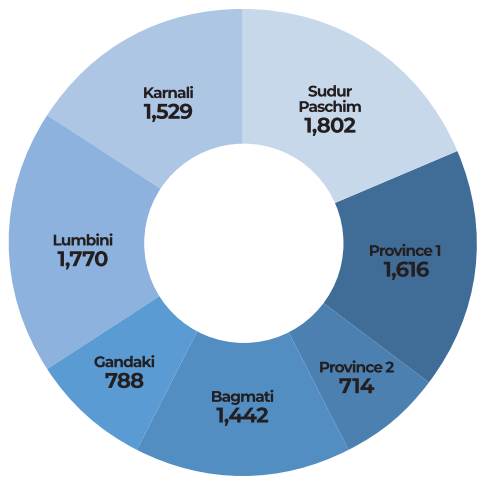
In Nepal, Suresh's father Prabhu had to make five trips to Kathmandu over the last few months. Private airlines were hesitant to accommodate a stretcher but Nepal Airlines agreed. The Nepali mission put pressure on the employer to bear the medical and travel costs.

In many ways Suresh was lucky. He survived the fall when he could have been one of the many coffins that arrive at Kathmandu airport every week. His medical costs in Malaysia and air tickets were borne by the employer.

Among many stories of an uncaring state, there are stories

minister's job scheme

Over 10,000 PMEP projects have been implemented so far this FY, up from 4,302 last FY



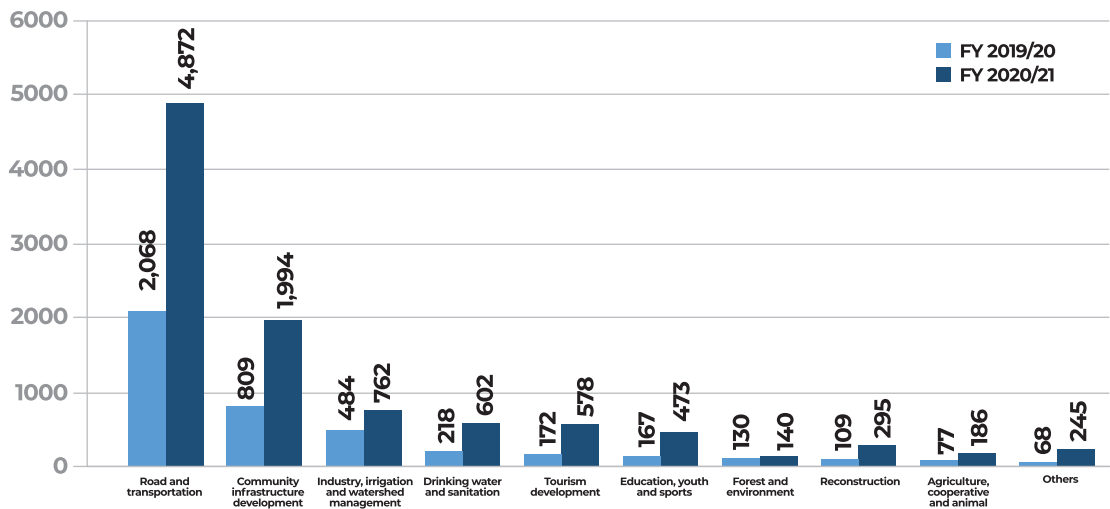
on part of local governments to readjust their plans.

Dhakal notes that there must be increased coordination between the federal and local governments so the latter sets aside a budget for PMEP projects equipment or the guideline must be updated to allow for non-wage expenditure.

In Karnali Province, a parallel Chief Minister's Employment Program (CMEP) has relieved pressure on municipalities.

"Salaries of both programs are the same so the jobseekers unable to benefit from PMEP can get work through this program. Furthermore, there is more leeway with the

Close to half of the projects proposed under PMEP are under road and transportation categories.



CMEP because the purchase of equipment and material is allowed at a 60:40 ratio," says Resham Bahadur Budha, Chief Administrative Officer of Narayan Municipality in Dailekh.

For a more lasting impact, local leaders stress on the need to equip PMEP beneficiaries with marketable skills and experience. "If the scheme had an element of graduation, beneficiaries could eventually wean off the program," says Mayor Ganesh KC.

Appeals to employers and associations to make use of local labour, including unemployed

registered under PMEP have failed to yield results. KC adds that Employment Service Centers (ESCs) need to be further strengthened to coordinate with the private sector which is responsible for creating maximum jobs.

"If there is a need for a plumber, it would be good to rely on a roster of plumbers at ESC to hire from. As it is now, PMEP is not designed for skilled, but unemployed jobseekers," he says.

Beyond lapses in current infrastructure such as the capacity of the ESC and the available MIS system, he shares relying on ESCs

also demands a mindset change. "We are used to relying on personal referrals and networks, so such new practices will take time to adapt to," he adds.

Suman Ghimire says the Labour Ministry is working to strengthen ESC to play a stronger coordination and referral role and has set aside a budget to train over 59,000 PMEP beneficiaries for the next fiscal year, but makes it clear that the scheme is not for the skilled workers.

"We need to understand that PMEP is targeted to the poorest who are struggling to make ends meet. For the unemployed who are skilled and educated such as

returnee migrants, there are self-and wage-employment programs run by other line agencies, and ESCs can help with referrals and counseling," he explains.

Now more than ever, social protection programs like PMEP are needed to provide lifelines to the poorest. The World Bank says two out of five economically active Nepalis have lost their jobs. Seasonal migrant workers from India are reeling under the second wave. Internal migrants are also returning home en masse.

The foreign labour market is picking up, but very slowly. The macro-picture of remittance may have defied predictions but many have lost their jobs.

Says one EC: "We are best placed to give critical feedback on implementation challenges. It would be helpful if they came to monitor our work from the center, to understand the ground realities. Sometimes, it is simple challenges and small kinks, if sorted, could go a long way."

To be fair, PMEP is still at its nascent stages and it will take a while for this massive undertaking to take off, further complicated by the pandemic.

India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), for example, is in its 15th year and is proving to be critical during the pandemic by providing employment to almost a quarter of the labor force.

But as promised in the last budget, the expectation from the Nepal government's flagship employment program during this unprecedented time was for swift and bold action, both because of and in spite of Covid-19. 🇳🇵

health

like that of Suresh Teli where different agencies of the state came together, surpassing the expectation of the people who are conditioned to not expect too much from the government.

His family recognises these positive aspects and is happy their son is finally coming, but is also cautious of what lies ahead: the long road to recovery, from physical and mental wounds, from unpaid loans and foregone earnings, and from personal relationships strained by distance.

The Teli family has only a tiny piece of land, and it has to pay Suresh's medical bills by borrowing from local lenders. Formal support is unlikely to come through.

The recently signed Social Security Agreement (SOCSO) between Malaysia and Nepal only applies to work-related injuries, illness, or death. Suresh's family is hopeful that the Foreign Employment Board will provide injury compensation via the Welfare Fund, but even this is unlikely given uncertainties around his labour permit status as he has been away for three years.

The evening of 23 April, Suresh was being pushed in a wheel-chair out of the arrival area at Kathmandu airport and put into an ambulance with the support of the medics and his father as they waited for the rest of the family to join them before heading to the Trauma Centre.

When his mother, Urmila Teli finally climbed into the ambulance, Suresh glowed and broke into a wide smile. Despite the discomfort due to his injuries and the support from the Jewett brace, he leaned aside from the stretcher to touch her feet. He was finally home. 🇳🇵

Upasana Khadka

HBL

सुविधा कर्जा

पारिवारिक समारोह
(विवाह, व्रतवन्ध, अन्नप्राशन)

स्वास्थ्य उपचार

घरेलु सामग्री

बैदेशिक भ्रमण

उच्च शिक्षा

आवश्यकता कति कति,
हामी दिन्छौं पुग्ने जति

सरल, सहज हिमालयन बैंकको 'सुविधा कर्जा'
जीवनमा आई पर्ने विभिन्न आवश्यकतालाई सहज पार्न अधिकतम १० वर्षको लागि रु. ४० लाख सम्मको सहूलियतपूर्ण 'सुविधा कर्जा' लिई आफ्नो र परिवारको खुसी बढाउनुहोस् ।

विस्तृत जानकारीको लागि नजिकको शाखा वा फोन नं ४२२७७४९/४२४६२९८ मा सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस् ।

HBL

हिमालयन बैंक लिमिटेड

Himalayan Bank Ltd.

himal@himalayanbank.com

www.himalayanbank.com

himalayanbankltd

@himalayanbanknp

Himalayan Bank Ltd.

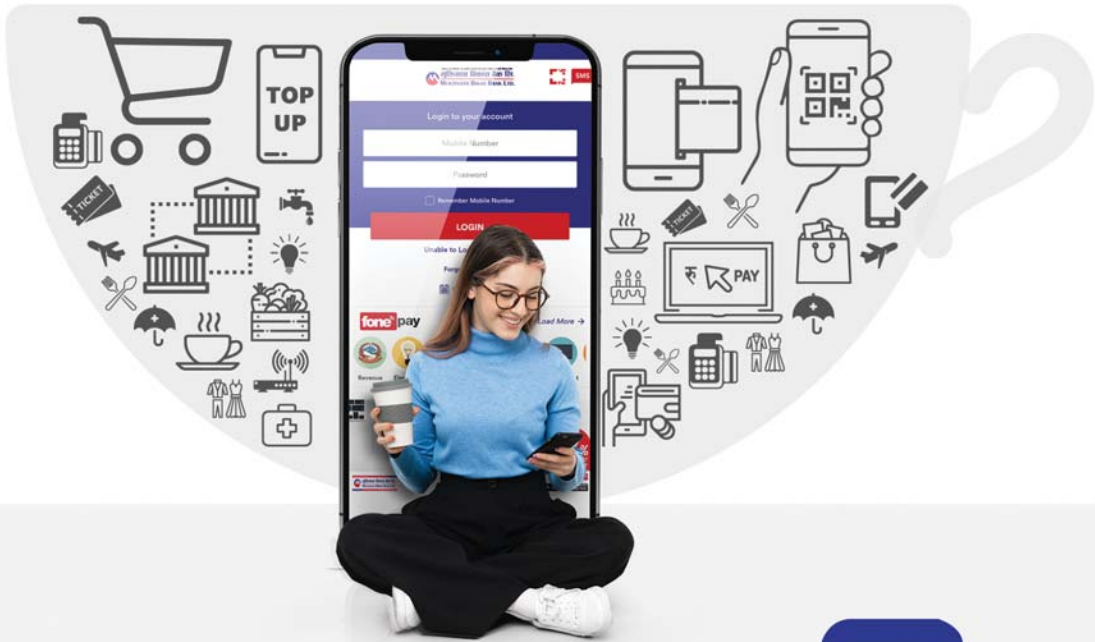
Himalayan Bank (Viber)

QR SCAN
FOR MORE
DETAILS.

शतहरू लागु हुनेछन् ।



NOW BANKING IS AS EASY AS DRINKING Coffee



The Ass-cent of Everest

It has been said by people much more smart ass than me, that the current crisis is an opportunity to rebuild Nepal's tourism model from scratch. It is true: this country has been sold for too cheap for too long, and it's time we raised our going rate.

But we cannot do that without upgrading our service and facilities, and that is why I am glad to see that mountaineering outfits this spring season have introduced the Everest Executive Expedition option, which is three times more expensive than going for the summit on Coach Class.

Some snobs have poked fun at commodores at base camp, and mini bars at Base Camp. To that I can only say: eat your heart out. It is only a question of time before there will be a sauna at Camp II and wind-powered blow heaters on the South Col.

Have you noticed that every time the Department of Tourism and Marxism brings out a list of expeditions on various Himalayan mountains, it also has the revenue it earned from fees on each of them?

Kaching! The sound of the cash counter is proof that our foremost concern is to sell our highest mountains to the highest bidders. However, allow me to just play the devil's defence lawyer here to say that we are still not realising the full money-making potential of our mountains by being too focussed on royalty. After all, we are now a republic.

And this means that to really make a killing, we must THINK BIG. Raising the height of Everest last year was a start, but why did we have to stop at adding only 86cm to the highest mountain in the world? It can very easily be made even higher so that we can charge higher fees.

The MoCAT has shown it has imagination with new rules this year like the ban on taking selfies on the mountain without the express permission of the Liaison Officer, or putting daily quota on the number of climbers on the summit. (Both available for additional fees.)

So, it will be no big departure for the ministry to require very expedition to carry 10kg of rocks to the summit and deposit it there. Not only will this increase the height of Mt Everest, but also its weight. Expeditions can also carry their garbage to the summit and dump it there for additional stature.

My back of the envelope calculation is that if this rule is followed, we could easily raise the elevation of Everest to 9,000m within the next fiscal year, and thereby also increase the royalty by \$10 million.

Imagine what a boost that would also be to our national morale, our sovereignty, territorial integrity and gastroenterology, if Qomalongma (which in Tibetan means 'Goddess Grandmother of the Earth') and Sagarmatha (Nepali for 'Pointy One Behind the White One with the Flat Top That Is Third from Right If You Are Looking Counter-clockwise').

GONE can then invest the fees on adding facilities on Everest to generate even more revenue. Since just about every peak in Nepal now has a view tower, it would be a big mistake not to have one on Mt Everest. And as long as we are at it, MoCAT can install a funicular up the Khumbu Icefall, a moving walkway to the base of the Lhotse Face, and then a cable car to the South Col. From there, there can be a series of escalators to the Summit View Tower Restaurant & Lounge Pvt Ltd.

This way, everyone regardless of caste, class or creed, will be able to make a first ass-cent of Everest.



The Ass

TATA MOTORS
Connecting Aspirations

TATA

NEW FOREVER

A WHOLE NEW WORLD OF POWERFUL & ADVANCED CARS FROM TATA MOTORS

NEXON
with Electric Sunroof

TIGOR
New Powerful BS6 Engines with AMT

ALTROZ
India's Safest Hatchback

TIAGO
New Powerful BS6 Engines with AMT

HS
with Automatic Transmission and Panoramic Sunroof

SAFETY IS NEW FOREVER

GLOBAL NCAP

★★★★★

Safest Range with 5-Star and 4-Star Rated Cars

DRIVING PLEASURE IS NEW FOREVER

Multi-drive Modes

Automatic Transmission

Powerful BS6 Engines

DESIGN IS NEW FOREVER

Panoramic Sunroof

BS6 ENGINE

SIPRADI TRADING PVT. LTD., An ISO 9001:2015 Certified Company, Thapathali 01-4250610, 4222150, 4222152.

SIPRADI