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AMIT MACHANASI

A Kathmandu Spring

The Nepal Communist Party (NCP) has by now squandered the overwhelming mandate it got in the 2017 elections to govern for five years, and its future now rests on an impending decision by the Supreme Court.

While the verdict could go either way, one of the two NCP factions is going to lose out.

Whether it will be the establishment faction led by Prime Minister K P Oli or the breakaway group headed by Pushpa Kamal Dahal, will be decided in the upcoming weeks. Oli says it is preparing for snap polls in April-May, while Dahal loyalists are in the streets demanding a reinstatement of the Lower House.

Both are trying to demonstrate popular support by renting bigger crowds, and thus influence the Supreme Court and the Election Commission. Both sides say they are sanguine that the rulings will be in their favour.

Nepal's current political crisis is not a result of any great ideological disagreement, but a personal power

struggle between Oli and Dahal after NCP unity. This may be why rallies by both Oli and Dahal have been packed with cadre and people bused in from the districts, while most people watch the daily rallies from the sidelines (above).

Whichever way the Supreme Court verdict goes, Nepal's politics will be tumultuous as leaders jockey for supremacy, even as regional geopolitics influences the outcome. Beijing has been openly lobbying to keep the NCP intact, while the Indo-American alliance would like to see Nepal's communists split and weakened.

"Even if the House is reinstated, a new struggle for supremacy will begin within the party to form an election government," predicts political commentator Shyam Shrestha. "It will not be as easy as before when the NCP had a two-thirds majority, and the permutations and combinations of coalition-building will be wide open."

If the House is restored, Shrestha sees the Dahal faction forming a government in coalition with the Nepali Congress and Janata Samajbadi Party Nepal. But if the Court rules in favour of the dissolution, he sees political chaos.

Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali admits the uncertainty is due to the wait for the Supreme Court decision. He says, "But once it rules in favour of dissolution, that will steer the country's mood towards elections. The conditions are right for polls, the Nepali Congress, Janata Samajbadi Party and smaller parties are all ready, there are no security issues, and the Election Commission is prepared."

However, the political futures of Oli and Dahal will also rest on the Supreme Court's decision on the 13 writ petitions that are currently being heard. Oli's ambitions will be derailed if the House is reinstated, while Dahal and his supporters will suffer a setback if it is not. The Court's


decision has become a prestige issue for both sides, with Dahal hinting that the court is influenced by Baluwater.

Some in the NCP see the possibility of an election actually bringing the two factions of the NCP closer, but Central Committee member Beduram Bhusal disagrees.

"There is just too much bad blood. I see zero percentage possibility of reunification," says Bhusal, a Dahal loyalist.

If the House is restored, the Dahal faction will have to choose between election or agitation. However, it may not be so easy for Dahal and his supporters to "unleash a hurricane" as he has threatened.

Bhusal says his party has no plans for election: "Even if the house is not restored, there will not be an election. Why plan for something that will not happen?"

For Oli, restoration of the House is equally fraught. He will either have to resign, or face a no confidence vote in Parliament. 


Mukesh Pokhrel


End of war is not peace


EDITORIAL
PAGE 2


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End of war is not peace

Communist parties the world over are obsessed with anniversaries. October Revolution Day, Mao Zedong's Birthday, North Korea's Day of Victory in the Great Fatherland Liberation War, etc.

In Nepal, the Maoist party used to commemorate its 'People's War Day' on 13 February with much fanfare. This year, except for a book launch by former Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai, the anniversary went largely unmentioned and unnoticed.

Perhaps it was intentional, since the warring sides now represent the state, and the Maoists who were till 2006 executing UML cadre, have joined hands in the NCP. (They are each other's throats again, but that is another story.)

For the former guerrilla commanders, it seems, this is no time to rake things up and remind people of the anniversary of an armed struggle that ended up killing more than 17,000 Nepalis in ten years. It was called People's War because it killed people.

It was on the night of 13 February 1996 that a group of Maoist guerrillas led by Nanda Kishore Pun and Barsha Man Pun crept up a mountain and attacked a police post in Holeri of Rolpa district. Nanda Kishore Pun is now vice-president of the republic, and Barsha Man Pun was till December Energy Minister in the NCP government.

The 'revolution' began a day before Valentine's with simultaneous attacks on police stations in Gorkha, Kavre, Sindhuli. A week previously, Bhattarai had handed over a list of 40 demands with a two week ultimatum to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. Among them: a ban on Hindi movies, scrapping of the 1950 India-Nepal treaty, stopping Gurkha recruitment and curtailment of the power of the monarchy.

Deuba ignored the demands, most of which were beyond his power to fulfill. In any case, the Maoists had no intention of waiting two weeks, and launched the attacks with World War I vintage rifles and *khukri*.

Deuba was too distracted with infighting within his Nepali Congress party, and ignored the escalating violence in the countryside. When he did react, police retaliation was so brutal and arbitrary it ended up pushing ordinary people, who had wanted no part in the war, into the Maoist fold.

The Maoist rationale for armed struggle was the belief that feudalism was so deeply entrenched in Nepal that parliamentary democracy was no solution. A Mao-style protracted armed struggle was needed to counter the structural violence of the state. This was partly true. The state apparatus had tried to ensure in successive elections in the early 1990s that Samyukta Jana Morcha, the

electoral front of the Maoists, would not be able to expand its presence in the party's stronghold in the mid-western mountains.

The insurgency was an attempt to short-circuit liberal democracy and constitutional monarchy that had just been established six years previously through the first People's Movement of 1990.

In fact, the outlines of a new Nepal were just starting to appear: the open market was attracting foreign investors, jobs were being created, the press was free, and the Decentralisation Act devolved power to the grassroots for the first time. The impact of accountable local government on development and service delivery was starting to be felt when the insurgency ignited.

For the Maoists, who believed political power came from bullets not ballots, these elected village government units became rivals. Which is why, after the police, their first targets were popular local leaders. By the end of the conflict in 2006, most village council buildings had been bombed and local leaders had either been killed, or forced to flee.

There is no doubt that for the Maoist leaders as well as the forces inside and outside Nepal backing them, the sole purpose of the armed struggle was power. However, because the objective conditions for revolution were so

conducive due to social injustice, exclusion and inequity, the spark the Maoists lit in Holeri in 1996 spread like wildfire.

Twenty-five years after the war started, and nearly 15 years after it ended, there is not much to show for it. Yes, Nepal is now a secular, federal republic, but that has not made much of a difference to the everyday life of citizens. In fact, the promise and sacrifices of the revolution have been squandered, and parties calling for a rollback of a Hindu state and even monarchy are gaining traction.

The Maoist party is itself divided between those in the government of Prime Minister K P Oli and others loyal to Maoist supremo Prachanda. Other former UML leaders have joined hands with erstwhile Maoist comrades. Wartime excesses have not been addressed, and the state is actively ensuring that the transitional justice mechanism is toothless.

The end of war has not meant peace. The legacy of war can still be seen in the residual violence and impunity, the message is that you can get away with extortion and murder, rape and torture.

An armed struggle was not necessary for political change in 1996, violence was never the answer. However, the precursors of conflict are still present in Nepal, and history can repeat itself unless we build a just, egalitarian, inclusive and accountable polity.



KUMAR SHRESTHA

A generation later, the legacy of war is seen in residual violence and impunity.

ONLINE PACKAGES



FROM THE FRONTLINES

Twenty-five years after the Maoist insurgency started on 13 February 1996, five journalists who covered the war remember their own experiences reporting on the conflict. Full story on [pages 14-15](#).



SAVE SNAKES TO SAVE NATURE

Residents of Kaski and surrounding districts call up Rohit Giri several times a day when there is a snake in the vicinity that needs to be removed and rescued. Watching video of how he hooks a writhing snake and shoves it into his bag. [Nepali Times](#) YouTube channel.



WOMEN MARCH AGAINST RAPE

Following the proposed travel restrictions on women under 40 by the Department of Immigration, and the rape and murder of a 17-year-old schoolgirl in Baitadi, women took to the streets to protest.



FROM THE FRONTLINES

2020 was a write-off for Nepal's tourism, and for Pokhara, the country's prime destination, it was catastrophic. But guess who have come to rescue the city from complete ruin: Nepal travellers. More in this video only in our website.

HIMALAYAN TSUNAMIS

The disaster in Uttarakhand was similar to what happened in Langtang during the 2015 earthquake and a warning for hydropower plants. ('More Himalayan Tsunamis', Editorial, Issue #1048). A very real concern, especially in the context of climate change and future earthquakes.

Austin Lord

DREADED BLISS

Writer did a pretty good job highlighting one of the biggest issues women have to face, besides countless other issues faced by Nepali women ('Dreaded Bliss', Anjana Rajbhandary, Issue #1048). Myself and countless other women who came back to Nepal to do something in the country have been affected by this annoying behaviour.

Pooja Vaidya

● Excellent article. The whole concept of 'boundaries' is new in Nepali society. Crossing these 'boundaries' is widely accepted under the pretext of 'guardianship'. Marriage is not a union of boy and girl, it is the union of two families.

Shyam Upadhyaya

● Elsewhere, unless you live in a small village no one scrutinises what you are doing in such detail like they do in Nepal. Women are free to decide their career/relationship/ life choices without being constant sources for gossip.

Himali Upadhyaya

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

Toxic patriarchy bullying women again ('Nepali women protest proposed travel restrictions', Nepali Times online). If we can vote at 18 we can make our own travel arrangements. Why not ask males under 40 to get permission to travel too?

Susan Welch

● On what basis and logic does the government make rules like this? At the same time, the strict rules required to obtain a vehicle licence are made lenient (despite the poor traffic safety record) and criminals who are supposed to be prosecuted are given party tickets and made legislators, and even ministers. All good content for a joke book. The country has become a laughing stock of the world.

Shyamal Krishna Shrestha

● If it weren't for Nepali women, Nepal would stop functioning. I bet there were no women in the committee that came up with this stupid idea.

Samyok Shrestha

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

This *Nepali Times* editorial two decades ago this week marked the tenth anniversary of the 1990 People's movement that turned Nepal from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy, unbanned political parties and unshackled the press. It is prescient that 20 years later, we are writing another Editorial (above) marking the 25th anniversary of the start of the Maoist armed struggle.

Nothing has changed in the 20 years following that Editorial, except adding more revolutionaries turned greedy leaders into positions of power. We have written about it so many times in this space over the years that we now sound like a broken record even to our own ears. But these words from 20 ago still ring true and the message is still relevant.

The Editorial was titled '1951, 1960, 1972, 1980, 1990, 2011', marking the milestones of Nepali history. To that we might have to add 2021, depending on which way the current political crisis unfolds in the coming months.

Excerpts from the editorial from *Nepali Times* #30 16-22 February 2001:

As in Animal Farm, it is getting more and more difficult to recognise our erstwhile revolutionaries and freedom fighters. When we look at their faces we do not see anymore the selfless sacrifice, incarceration and exile that many went through. All we see are the grinning, greedy countenances of leaders we trusted who have let us down-not once, not twice, but over and over again. The euphoria has now been replaced by disillusionment,

apathy. Radicals from the left and the right, religious zealots and separatists will fill this vacuum.

From very early on, it was apparent that freedom fighters who went straight from their jail cells to take oaths of office were going to let the people down. But we told ourselves: democratic transitions are by definition messy, just give them some time. Now, time has run out, our transition has lasted too long, and it is messier than is permissible for a country with our capability. Today, ten years after the renewal of democracy, the stench of political decay hangs heavy in the air.

In the past ten years, the political leadership of all parties have had a chance to rule. But all they have shown is fecklessness, callous immorality, and a fatal deficiency in the art of governance. They have squandered their mandates in petty infighting, self-enrichment and self-centredness, radicalising a seething citizenry and bringing the country to its present state.

Today, 50 years after our first taste of democracy and 10 years after restoring it, the moral of the story is: Democracy doesn't come with an indefinite guarantee. It needs to be safeguarded by careful and vigilant application.

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



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Times.com WHAT'S TRENDING

Dreaded Bliss

by Anjana Rajbhandary

Nepali society places a lot of pressure on women to get married and have kids. More than a cultural issue, this is a matter of lacking compassion and being blatantly cruel to women. Read the full story and watch video on our website.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Most commented



The Other ABC Trek

by Bimal Kadel

70 years ago, when a French expedition came to climb Annapurna I, its members made history by being the first ever to be on top of a 8,000m peak. In December last year, a 25-member team retraced their footsteps to discover this historic trek route. Full story on www.nepalitimes.com

Most popular on Twitter



Cleared to land

by Nepali Times

Affected by the pandemic, Pokhara's hotels, bars, paragliding and ultralight clubs, for which international tourists were the main source of income, have partially recovered because of domestic visitors. Read the full article for details.

Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Cleared to land
Ruined by the pandemic, Pokhara's economy revives with a little help from Nepali tourists.

ヒマラヤNight @Night04812666
It might take a while until tourists from other countries throng to Pokhara. Photos and videos Nepalis post on social media will keep attracting the attention of those yearning for visit the perfect resort and eventually contribute to reviving its hospitality industry.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
70 years after the first ascent of a 8,000m peak, a trekking group retraces the footsteps of Maurice Herzog's expedition to Annapurna I.

rupajoshi @rupajoshi
This was a fascinating read!

Prabhakar Shrestha @prabshr
Got immersed in the trail , beautiful read :)

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
#Editorial: More Himalayan tsunamis
The devastating Nanda Devi glacial lake flood in #India's #Uttarakhand is a warning for #Nepal to be prepared for similar disasters in the future.

Pigreen @pigreen1
Many scientists have been warning about risk of glacial lake overflow but collapse of Nanda Devi glacier is another warning.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Visitors to Pokhara this week have been disappointed to see that Phewa Lake has been partially drained to allow repairs of the dam.

Suresh Pradhan @Suresh42654092
This brings another opportunity to the vicinity of Begnas/ Rupa Lake, not very far from Pokhara.

KEPLER DAI @simbinews
Is the "Repair of the dam"- the latest excuse for further encroachment?

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Nepal braces for new wave with vaccine drive

Reduced Covid-19 infections provides Nepal a window to catch-up with vaccinating the vulnerable

● **Sonia Awale**

Even as Nepal completes the first phase of its Covid vaccine drive to inoculate frontline health workers and other high-risk groups, new hyper-spreading variants of the coronavirus, as well as vaccine denial have raised concerns about the efficacy of the campaign.

Public health experts, however, say the government must continue its vaccination drive to reach as many vulnerable people as possible with a better communication strategy and more aggressive promotion.

Nepal is one of the first countries in the region to start a mass Covid-19 vaccination drive. But the first phase saw a moderate turnout with only half of the doctors, nurses, FCHVs, security personnel and cleaners prioritised by the government inoculating themselves because of the safety concerns and inaccessibility.

This forced the Health Ministry to expand the first phase to also include civil servants, diplomats, bankers and journalists so that it could use up the 1 million doses of Covishield vaccines donated by India last month.

With additional 2.25 million Covishield doses under the WHO's COVAX initiative arriving in Nepal by early March and another 2 million that the government is in talks to purchase from the Serum Institute of India, officials are gearing up for the second phase of the vaccination for people above 55 years and those with co-morbidities starting from 7 March.

This will be followed by the age group 40-54 and then those below 40 years of age.

The Department of Drug Administration has also approved Chinese vaccine Sinopharm for emergency use, clearing the way for 500,000 doses of the vaccine that China has offered Nepal.

"The campaign will now be



community-based. Unlike the first phase that was facility-based, we will take the vaccine to the people and ensure higher coverage," assured Shyam Raj Uprety, head of government's Covid Vaccine Strategy. "And as per the WHO recommendation, our advisory groups will soon finalise their decision to provide the second dose between 8-12 weeks."

Public health experts say that the emergence of new variants should not dissuade the government from discontinuing or scaling back its vaccination drive.

"An RNA virus will have variants, it is a given, we have to live with them. In fact, we might have our own variant in South Asia, but we should keep on vaccinating

and saving lives," says Sameer Dixit of the Centre for Molecular Dynamics Nepal.

Of the multiple variants circulating globally, the one first identified in the UK called B.1.1.7 is more widespread, and have been detected in Nepal in travellers arriving from Britain. The good news is that AstraZeneca Covishield vaccine has been found to be effective against the strain.

However, a trial involving 2,000 people in South Africa claimed that Oxford jabs offered only minimal protection against mild and moderate cases (of their variant B.1.351). Experts caution that it may

be too soon to declare the vaccine ineffective because the study was conducted in a small population of young people.

In Brazil, a variant called P.1 has been found to contain a set of additional mutations that may affect its ability to be recognised by antibodies, adding to the challenge.

"What's important in this debate is that even if one were to contract Covid, the vaccine will prevent people from getting severely ill and dying," says Buddha Basnyat of the Patan Academy of Health Sciences. "Trials and emergency use so far has strongly addressed safety concerns regarding Covishield, so we can't let



news of variants put a damper on the vaccination campaign."

The nationwide vaccination campaign is taking place at a time when Nepal and the rest of the South Asia are reporting much fewer cases and fatalities, much of which has been credited to limited contact tracing and herd immunity in major cities after large chunks of the population developed resistance against SARS-CoV-2 after contracting it.

But the lack of surveillance, seroprevalence studies and antibody tests means that researchers have not been able to confirm localised immunity.

"The government is unwilling to conduct a study despite interest from aid agencies. Results from these studies would have helped us better prepare vaccination strategy at a time when we face great resource constraint," says Dixit.

Nepal also needs to continue with vaccine diplomacy and look into other shots, in particular, Chinese Sinovac and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin. Both the vaccines use the whole inactivated (dead) virus, because of which they are unable to infect people or cause pathological effects but deploy the immune system to mount a defensive reaction against the virus.

Sinovac made global headlines when it was found to be only 50.4% effective in a trial in Brazil, whereas it performed better in Turkey (91% efficacy). Covaxin is also controversial because of its emergency use among the frontline health workers in India despite not completing its phase three trials.

It will do well for Nepal to keep track of their trials with the government aiming to vaccinate 72% of its eligible population above 18 years. People aged 55 and above make up 11% of Nepal's population whereas the 40-54 age group account for 13%. People aged 18-39 made up nearly half of Nepal's 28.8 million population in the 2011 census.

In the meantime, the government needs to enforce the equitable distribution of the vaccine to the remotest parts of the country with the most at-risk groups high in priority. Public health experts say that with cases rising again in India, Nepal could also see a spike as people become complacent and mingle more.

Says Sher Bahadur Pun of the Infectious Disease Hospital in Teku: "We have been given this reprieve with fewer cases and fatalities. We need to utilise this time to vaccinate the elderly so that the most vulnerable in our communities are protected if and when the next wave hits us." 🇳🇵

Nepal's Covid-19 Vaccine Line-up

	Vaccines	Doses	Procurement	Arrival date
	Covishield	1 million	Government of India grant	21 January (being administered)
	Covishield	2.25 million (first batch of the total doses required for 20% of Nepal's population that it applied for)	With £550 million UK government support under WHO and GAVI COVAX initiative	Inoculations to start early March
	Covishield	2 million	To be purchased by Nepal government at subsidised rate (\$4 per dose)	Inoculations to start 1st week of March
	Sinopharm	500,000	Chinese government grant, got Nepal OK for emergency use	Possibly March

VCG

PRABHA BANK

Fuel price hike again

Nepal Oil Corporation has once more raised the price of petroleum products after pressure from India because prices in Nepal are lower than in India and petrol and diesel were being smuggled across the border. In the latest increase, the price of diesel, petrol, aviation fuel and kerosene has been increased by NRs2 per litre and LPG gas by NRs25. The price of petrol is now NRs 114 per litre, with diesel and kerosene costing NRs 97 at the pump. The price LPG has now jumped to NRs1,400. NOC has earlier increased petrol and diesel prices in 10 February. More than half the price of fuel is government tax.

SJ Moto Bike Gallery

Nepal's first motorbike museum SJ MOTO opened on 12 February. The gallery houses a collection of



historic motorbikes and also serves as a retail outlet where customers can buy brand new and reconditioned superbikes, and a cafe with Nepali cuisine. It was inaugurated by Director of Syakar Trading Saurabh Jyoti.

TATA Forever range

Sipradi Trading has opened pre-booking of Tata's much awaited New Forever concept with modified and powerful



engine in Nepal. The series got five star and four star ratings in safety from Global NCAP.

Nishan Magnite

Pioneer Moto Corp is set to launch the new Nissan Magnite on 22 February, following which the SUV will be available across all Nepal showrooms and on the official Nissan Nepal website. Nepal is the first



international market for the new SUV, created with the philosophy 'Make in India, Make for the World'.

Herb exports up

Exports of herbs to India have increased almost six-fold in the past year to reach Rs313 million from July-November 2020. The medicinal plants include Timur, Ritha, Padamchal, Chutro and Chiraito. However, exports of yarsagumba to China declined during the pandemic.



Mingma Gyalje Sherpa on a traverse on K2 this winter (*right*).

And on the summit of K2 at 5PM on 16 January, with another member of the Nepali team.



● Mukesh Pokhrel

When he was a boy, Mingma Gyalje Sherpa, used to look out the window of his home in the Rolwaling Valley at the imposing west face of Mt Chobutse. It was dwarfed by higher nearby peaks like Gauri Shankar and Melungtse, but the 6,686m high mountain's sheer beauty had an irresistible pull.

His village was at 4,200m and the boy used to take the family yak herd to graze in high pastures up to 5,300m every monsoon and gaze at the surrounding peaks from sunrise to sunset.

"My relatives would bring back chocolates from foreign climbers, and I used to think that if I became a porter, I would also get to eat lots of chocolates," he smiles.

At age 19, he joined his uncle who was with a Japanese expedition on Manaslu. He reached 6,400m but had to turn back due to bad weather. He joined another expedition on Lhotse, which also abandoned the climb halfway. In 2009, he climbed Mt Everest, and later climbed it five times, but he always had the urge to climb for himself and not for others.

Mingma G, as he now called himself, decided to climb Chobutse solo to fulfil his childhood wish, and also because it was more difficult than the higher peaks he had climbed. Everyone told him it was a crazy idea, and he himself agreed. He made it to the top in 2015, was snowed in for two days on the way down, but survived.

He then went on to climb other challenging Rolwaling peaks like Chekigo and Parchamo, as well as other climbs of Ama Dablam, Paldor and Himlung.

Mingma G is that new breed of Nepali mountaineers who do not just help foreigners get to the top, but climb for the sheer adventure. That is why he decided to take a team to K2 in December 2020—because the second highest mountain had never been climbed before in winter.

Located in the Karkoram on the Pakistan-China border, K2 lives up to its nickname as 'the savage mountain'. One in every four climbers has been killed in trying to climb it. This year alone, four climbers died on K2.

K2 is steep, has frequent rockfalls and avalanches, and demands technical skills at high altitude. To do this in winter, when temperatures reach -50 Celsius with

hurricane force winds had been considered impossible.

"It was very difficult. It was very cold," says Mingma G with typically laconic understatement.

Because of his own background, Mingma G empathises with the plight of the porters from Baltistan, Pakistan. "While trekking base camp, they were carrying our load but they were eating less, sleeping on snow in thin sleeping bags and thin mattresses...they are the ones who made our K2 successful in the beginning," he writes on his Instagram.

Mingma's all-Sherpa Nepali expedition arrived at Base Camp in December after a four-day march-in and immediately started fixing ropes on the mountain. As founder of Imagine Nepal, Mingma and other Nepalis had financed their expedition with a GoFundMe campaign because of loss of income due to the Covid-19

pandemic.

After numerous setbacks due to weather and poor health, Nepali member of three other expeditions decided at Base Camp to make their own attempt to climb K2. This was his chance to make an assertion of national pride and endorse homemade Himalayan mountaineering competence.

"It was a spontaneous decision, we met Nims Purja on the mountains and talked about climbing together not for individual glory, but for national pride, so we teamed up," he recalls.

On the night of 16 January, the ten Nepali climbers were in Camp III at 7,365m. The wind was howling, it was bitterly cold, and team members were reporting signs of frostbite, and the altitude was beginning to take its toll.

"It took us three or four minutes to cover every step," Mingma recalls. "K2 is much more difficult

than Mt Everest."

The ten climbed all day, past the Bottleneck, the treacherous near-vertical slopes with blue ice, and finally the gentle slope before the summit dome. There, the Nepalis had decided not to go to the top one by one, wait for everyone 10m below the summit, and walk up collectively.

It was 5pm on 16 January when they joined hands, sang the Nepali national anthem and took collective steps to the summit where they waved Nepali double triangle flag. They had done it: the first ever winter ascent of K2, the latest and greatest feat in mountaineering for the team.

"We did it to make the argument about who arrived first irrelevant. We climbed the peak together, we sang the national anthem together," says Mingma, who considers it his most important climb.

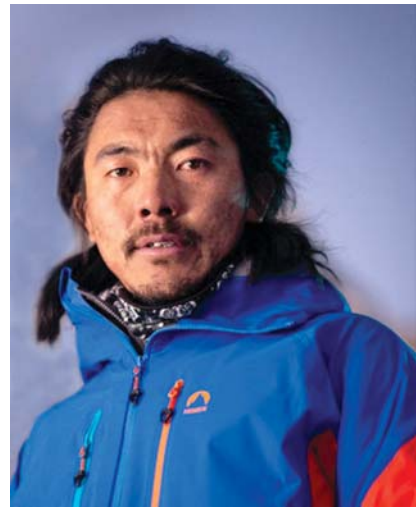
After all those Everest summits, Lhotse, and even the difficulty on Chobutse, K2 in winter was a whole new dimension.

But Mingma has barely any time to rest. He has a busy schedule ahead in 2021, with plans to climb Annapurna in March, Mt Everest and Lhotse again in April-May with clients. In June, he is going back to K2 and other Karakoram peaks. In September, he will be in Kathmandu only for two days before heading off to Manaslu.

Even with all the physical and mental toll that climbing takes, Mingma is happy doing what he is doing. There is a tinge of concern that he puts his family members through so much worry, but they also understand that climbing is his passion.

Mingma's other worry is that he can only sustain his own climbing by guiding clients to summits. This is a dangerous profession, and as he gets older he will have to find ways to pay for his own future adventures.

But the smile on his face shows that he is not really that worried: "I'm young now, I'm strong, everyone wants me to climb." 🇳🇵



Mingma G during his solo climb Chobutse in 2015, with the Tso Rolpa glacial lake below him, and last week in Kathmandu as he prepares for Annapurna in March.



Tuning in to radio during Covid-10

The importance of keeping local broadcasters going during disasters was felt more than ever during the pandemic

● Suman Basnet

As Nepal experienced the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic just as the rest of the world did, the value of local broadcasters was amplified like never before. Large parts of rural and semi-urban Nepal depend on local broadcasters for reliable information, a premium product during the pandemic.

Covid-19 also pushed local community radios into an existential crisis, with sources of incomes drying up as business sponsors themselves tried to survive. The situation was worsened with many community volunteers and staff falling sick.

Coupled with lack of connectivity and electricity supply added to difficulties in operation. The work-from-home solution did not work for local radio stations, especially in remote areas with low bandwidth.

Despite this, and not withstanding a slow start, community radios continued to broadcast lifesaving information to the most vulnerable.

Broadcast media, especially community radio is still the most accessible form of mass communication in Nepal. Community radios operating in locations poorly served by the government and commercial broadcasters are the most important link between the marginalised, and public service providers, including government offices, especially in times of a disaster.

Out of the approximately 800 FM radio stations in Nepal, close to half operate as not-for-profit media outlets, mostly in rural and semi-urban locations. Signals from community radio transmitters cover almost the entire population of the country. This is not a small achievement, especially when contrasted with Nepal's fledgling governance and human rights situations.

The pandemic also brought to the fore the gaps in the Nepali media ecosystem and the community radio sector.



Next year, Nepal's broadcasters will be marking an important milestone. It will be 25 years since the first non-governmental broadcaster, Radio Sagarmatha, was founded in 1997. By virtue of being the first non-governmental broadcaster in all of South Asia, Radio Sagarmatha has contributed significantly to Nepal's reputation in the world of community broadcasting.

It is, however, ironic that despite its elevated profile in the country and to some extent internationally, the community radio sector has been left to its own devices. In the lack of any legal recognition by way of a community radio policy and the absence

Radio Langtang is broadcasting programs on how children are supported by family members at home during the pandemic (above).

Radio Rudraksha, Jaleshwar has also been running programs on the Covid-19 situation (left).

of relevant laws and regulations, the sector is beset with malpractices and malpractices. Community radios all over South Asia suffer either a 'no-policy' or 'poor-policy' situation, and Nepal happens to fall under the latter category.

As community broadcasting gradually comes to term with the pandemic, it is time for renewed attention to the call for local radio friendly policies. In most of Nepal's neighborhood, community radios are controlled by applying unreasonable restrictions in terms of transmission power, content, advertisement space and so on. Local radio stations cannot operate freely, and have restrictions in news and current affairs.

However, appropriate policies and regulations can help resolve some of the main problems that prevent the sector from operating at its full capacity and potential, especially at times of emergencies. Distance broadcasting, decentralised production and provisions for remote broadcasting must be pursued. It is urgent to bring in the idea of emergency broadcasting during disasters, with a clear strategy and timeline. This has policy as well as resource implications, that have to be sorted out.

Connection between policy and practice is often direct and deep. As with every disaster, the consequences of this pandemic too have been more devastating for those that were already vulnerable in the communities. Reviewing and refining of strategies and practices of the stations are required to correctly address these situations.

The capacity of community radios to be inclusive is strongly linked to the way NGOs and cooperatives— which happen to be operating the greatest number of community radios in Nepal— are structured. Any discussion about enhancing access to community broadcasting needs to be coupled with revising the way non-governmental organisations are set up.

The need for strengthening further effective grassroots communications mechanisms so that voices hitherto unheard can be to be heard, has been even more amplified by this severely disruptive pandemic. Community radios are often the only way to bring perspectives of those living in poverty into the decision-making processes. Losing community stations to a disaster will mean losing the most critical communication link with vulnerable populations. The support received from national and international actors, has prevented that from happening, so far.

Community radios must continue doing what they are meant to do, which is to provide correct, appropriate and relevant information to the local groups in dialects and languages that are best understood locally. At the same time and collectively as a sector, the rest of the media ecosystem needs to step up advocacy for policy reform.

The rise of radicalism (populist nationalism, religion or economic development) has shrunk the space for civil society actors. They are either chased out or co-opted.

The well-known activist and author Arundhati Roy once wrote that 'there's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard'. It is clear that efforts from various quarters are still afoot towards this end. Community radio can and must try to change the status quo. 🇳🇵

Suman Basnet is the Regional Director of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, AMARC (Asia-Pacific).

Nepal's class divide

How motivated young teaching fellows are changing lives of students through remedial education

● Tom Robertson

When I taught in a Nepali government school, the biggest problem I faced was not poor facilities. Motivated teachers don't need much beyond chalk and a blackboard. The biggest problem was that so many children studied below their grade level.

In Nepal, many Grade 6 students read at Grade 3 level. Many Grade 7 students cannot add or subtract, much less multiply or divide. Students lag behind by three or four years, and not just a few students, sometimes half the class may be behind.

This is an enormous problem, made worse by Covid-19. Few schools recognise the issue, or have skills and resources to address it. Public school teachers are too busy dealing with daily challenges. Students are therefore missing the chance to learn.

Nepali students fall behind for many reasons. Some come unprepared for Grade 1 or 2, others get pulled out of school temporarily and never catch up. Some attend school irregularly, or struggle.

While the problems children face at home are socio-economic, the barriers at school are many: uninspiring and irregular teaching, low teacher expectations, and poor school management.

Schools where students fall behind rarely have the skills or resources needed to help them catch up. Some schools give up on them, dismissing the students as not capable instead of investing more time in helping them out. Low



Changing Stories Nepal Fellow Sangeeta Basnet teaching at Amar Secondary School in Urhari of Dang.

expectations become self-fulfilling.

Many students lose confidence and drop out. They decide school is not worth the time, and join their parents in earning an income for their families. Or, they stay in school and move from grade to grade, year after year. Lacking a base to build upon, they lag farther and farther behind.

In subjects like Math or English that scaffold skills one on top of another, the students often just go through the motions, copying things but not understanding, and not really learning anything.

Students either fail, or they cheat to move along. Cheating is widespread. That is how high school students, despite years of study, can barely read or write in English or Nepali. Many of the students are from diverse backgrounds who

speak their mother tongue at home.

This is a tragedy, but also a social justice issue. Those who lag behind often come from poor families, often Dalit or ethnic minority communities. Many are girls.

The solution would be to catch the problem when the children first fall behind in primary school. At that point they are only a few lessons behind their friends, not years and years, and there would still be time to build a solid base.

"It's never the students' fault," says Niharika Mainali of Changing Stories Nepal, which was founded in 2018 with an innovative approach that builds from the premise that all students can learn, and that we wrongly blame low performing students instead of admitting we are all responsible for their lack of

opportunity.

Changing Stories first identifies struggling primary students. At its schools in Hetauda and Dang, it assesses literacy and numeracy to determine the 15 lowest-performing students in grades 3, 4 and 5. Then, for 90 days, the students are tutored with two hours of extra Nepali and Math, either before or after school.

The stress is on actual student learning, and the students are tested during and at the end of the program. Last year in Dang, the program had 20 groups of 15 students each.

The remedial classes are taught by 'Fellows' of the organisation, who are talented, motivated college students trained by Changing Stories. While giving a helping hand to others, the young adults learn skills and experience and develop a taste for community service.

"I was teaching Grade 9 near Janakpur, and found that many didn't know the English alphabet. I realised they needed an intervention long before high school," explains Mainali. "I had a good job in Kathmandu. But I often thought I could be of more service working with public schools. The privileged students I was working with didn't need me."

She says schools make quick decisions about who can learn and who cannot, labeling students as incapable from a very young age. "The problem is not with the students. The students can learn, but we like to blame students for everything," she adds.

In Dang at the start of the year, only 37% of students could read

simple words, and only 18% could read a 4-sentence paragraph. At the program's end, 81% could read words, and 66% could read short sentences.

In baseline math tests, only 9% could do two-digit addition problems. After the program, 87% could. Fewer than 1% of students could solve a 2-digit carry-over subtraction problem, or multiply. Afterwards, about half could do both.

Changing Stories recorded similar progress in Hetauda, and have just started another year in Dang. The program seems like a fantastic bargain: for 90 sessions of 2-hour classes, each Fellow earns NRs14,000.

Training costs and staff support add a little. But imagine the benefits, and compare them with the costs: students sitting in classrooms year after year not learning—a lifetime of underachievement.

On a visit to Dang last year, I saw for myself why Changing Stories gets results. In a carpeted classroom painted in cheerful colours with student work on display, a Changing Stories Fellow worked with students on subtraction problems.

She explained concepts with piles of सिक्का (small bamboo sticks) sitting on the floor next to her students. She smiled, but pushed when necessary. She believed in the children even though many others had abandoned hope.

A Grade 4 student told me: "I like this class. Miss teaches well. If I don't understand, she shows me." Another student said, "Before I knew only addition, now I know subtraction. Now it comes easily."

I could see and hear the pride and self-confidence in these children.

Tom Robertson, PhD is a historian and creator of the *मिथो लेखाइ* videos on writing technique. He taught in Nepal's government schools as a Peace Corps volunteer in Khatang from 1993-1995.

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● **Achyut Tiwari** and
Ramesh Kumar Rai

There is no better way to understand the Mundum cultural belief system of the Kirat people than to walk across the mountains of eastern Nepal and let dreamtime take over.

The Mundum Trail traverses the important landmarks of the Rai-Limbu ethnic groups, and their way of life that blends shamanism, animism and Shiva worship. Mundum has parallels to Australian aboriginal oral traditions and folklore that revere nature.

First introduced in January 2018 to trekkers, the trail passes through important sites of these indigenous Kirat groups from Chakhewa Bhanjyang on the Khotang-Bhojpur border across Mehrung, Maiyung, Lauri, Shilichung peaks, then on to the holy Shalpa Pokhari to Bhojpur and ends at Maiyung and Suntale peaks. (*See map, below*)

The trail is of moderate difficulty, with the highest point at 4,165m, and being off the beaten track there are not many tea houses, so camping is necessary in the wilderness. There are some lodges in Diktel, Bhojpur and basic amenities at Shalpa Pokhari, but trekkers are advised to carry tents.

The trail commands a sweeping panorama of the eastern Himalaya with views of most major eight-thousanders, including Mt Everest (8,848.86m) Lhotse (8,516m) Lhotse Shar (8,382m) Makalu (8,463m), Cho Oyu (8,188m) and Kangchenjunga (8,586m).

There are lesser peaks that are more prominent because they are nearer: Karyolung, Ama Dablam, Thamserku, Kangtega, Chamlang, Baruntse, Jannu, and even Gauri Shankar and Langtang far off on the western horizon.

Besides the views, the trek is also a deep dive into Mundum culture, its rituals, landmarks, and way of life. The Kirati groups here speak 10 different languages, with new dialects in every next village. Besides them, there are a sprinkling of Sherpa and Tamang communities with their own culture and language.

Shalpa Pokhari and Shilichung Peak are two of the most important sites in Mundum culture, and a pilgrimage destination for the Rai and Limbu people. Legends speak of Salpa Pokhari being the inhabited place of the creator goddess, Sumnima and the Sky God, Paruhang from Kirat mythology.

Because of the heavy rainfall the region receives, the Mundum trail also has great eco-biological diversity, with wildlife, birds and plants found in great abundance in its verdant slopes, watershed and wetlands. The rhododendron, conifer and bamboo cloud forests teem with red panda, ghoral, danfe pheasant, deer, leopard, Himalayan black bears.

The transition from temperate to alpine landscape yields to high altitude meadows where villagers bring livestock to graze in the monsoon. Rearing animals is an important part of life in Mundum culture, and the trail passes many sheds housing yak, sheep, cows and water buffaloes.

Hiking through the settlements, it is clear that the Kirati people have been living in harmony with the nature that they consider holy, and their way of life is closely tied with the biological



1 Shilichung Peak (4,165 m) is the highest point on the Mundum Trail and a sacred place where the gurus of the Kirat people are believed to dwell. Kangchenjunga is visible on the eastern horizon, across the Arun River Valley.

RAMESH RAI

Exploring the spiritual terrain of the Eastern Nepal's

Mundum landscape


Kirat people opens our eyes to a whole new way of life

with the nature that they consider holy, and men diversity and the cycle of seasons.

The Mundum Trail is a perfect post-Covid-19 trek, where visitors reconnect with nature, rediscover the importance of maintaining an ecological balance and to develop sustainably.

This eastern Nepal trek is also a walk back in time, as we see a part of Nepal that has not been over-developed by tourism, and the trails remind us of a time before trekking ‘discovered’ Nepal.

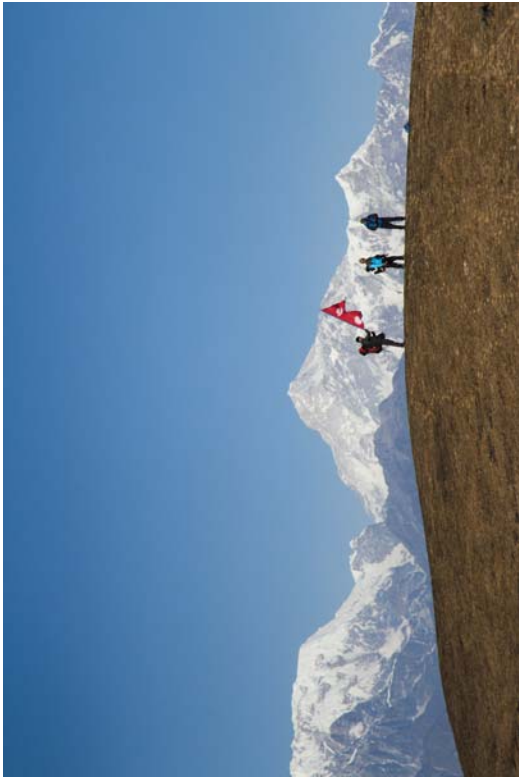
In its 70 years of history of tourism development, Nepal has never witnessed a catastrophe at the level of the Covid-19 pandemic. Tourism entrepreneurs say that things were not as bad even during the Maoist insurgency from 1996 to 2006 or in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquakes in Nepal.

While it may take time for international tourists to return to Nepal, the Mundum Trail is waiting for Nepali travellers who want to experience the real, raw Nepal and discover their country’s rich ethnic diversity and natural splendour. 

Achyut Tiwari, PhD, is a lecturer at Tribhuvan University and **Ramesh Kumar Rai** is a tourism entrepreneur.



Shalpa Pokhari (3,75 m) is a sacred site of the Kirat people. RAMESH RAI



Mattim Peak with Makalu (8,463m) looming on the horizon. PAVAN SHAKYA



Mattim Danda (3,100m) in the spring rhododendron season. SAMSOHANG RAI

Contemporary relevance of Mundum oral wisdom

● Bairagi Kainla

Despite my ethnic background, it was only later in life that I delved beyond the literary importance of my Mundum culture to discover that it as the original philosophy of life of my people.

The more I learnt about my Limbu heritage, the more I was forced to look beyond just the social science and anthropology of Mundum culture to its fragile beauty and its cultural completeness.

Since then, I have spent the most important years of my life to collect, edit and translate into Nepali language, facets of Mundum culture before it is obliterated by the relentless march of modern education, science and technology, migration and the process of globalisation.

My introduction to Mundum began after meeting the linguist, Prof R K Sprigg of the School of African and Oriental Studies, who showed me photocopies of handwritten Limbu manuscripts stored at the India Office Library by Brian H Hodgson in 1864.

Sprigg and his wife stayed with us in Sankhuwasabha for a month back then, but the importance of preserving Mundum culture still did not grab me. It was only after I read Iman Singh Chemjong’s *Kirat Mundum* that I really became aware of the importance of researching and preserving Limbu script, literature, culture and history.

Mundum is an oral tradition that has been passed down from one generation to the next in song, verse, fables and chants with its own creation myth,

explaining the importance of human co-existence with nature and all living things. Mundum may have animistic, shamanistic and Shaivite influences, but it transcends religion.

Mundum culture still forms the substrate of society in eastern Nepal, Sikkim, Darjeeling and beyond wherever there are Kirat settlers. The rituals and recitals lay down the rules for everything from planting to harvest, community relations, birth, death, marriage, dealing with the cycle of seasons, appeasing malevolent spirits and appealing to benevolent ones.

When a pig or chicken raised in the farm needs to be eaten, a Fedangma priest recites the proper prayers before they can be killed. There are rituals when women become pregnant, prayers are offered to ancestors and patron deities every three years. The Fedangma’s recitations are from memory, and are passed down from the priest before, and I have marvelled at the knowledge, vocabulary, symbolism, and literary richness contained in them.

These recitations describe the creation of life, how humans came to be, their migrations, the rise and fall of civilisations, evolution and extinction, and our place in this ancient unwritten history of the world. There are different styles, metres, and tonal variations in communicating these messages through humour, drama, stories and poetry that make Mundum a well-developed form of literature.

Mundum Trekking Trial




Mundum also emphasises affinity for nature and the importance of its protection: why we need to strike a balance with the web of life. It contains a wealth of lessons from past human experience in ensuring its own survival.

The emergence of human beings is regarded as the pinnacle of evolution, but after being let down, the Creator was forced to become invisible. This left human beings helpless in their ignorance, and thus began their suffering. They were consumed by greed, envy, ambition, anger and cruelty.

However, Mundum offers a solution to this tragic outcome, and the riddle of existence. This is a human-made dilemma, and humans can find a way out of it. There is still hope if humanity can strive for freedom from the cycle of birth and death through good karma. Death can be defeated by decent living, and a realisation of man’s place amidst the completeness and beauty of creation.

It is not enough to believe in goodness, Mundum teaches us to be good in our actions towards other people and to nature as well. The Earth is not just for human beings, we have to share it with other living things. Their survival will determine our survival.

This collective wisdom of the ages is an important message to us today as we strive to save life the Planet from human short-sightedness and avarice. 

Bairagi Kainla is the pen name of Til Bikram Nemang Limbu. He is an author and researcher, and served as Chancellor of the Nepal Academy. This piece is adapted from his acceptance speech at the 2019 Jagadamba Sri Award.



EVENTS

**Jazz Brunch**

Experience a laid-back Saturday afternoon with live jazz music, brunch, and a specialty drink in hand, at Kathmandu Marriott Hotel. 20 February, 3PM, Kathmandu Marriott Hotel

Bal Sahitya Mahotsav

The Rato Bangala Kitab initiative is here with its annual children's literature festival, to be held online. Participation is free. Sign up at Rato Bangala Kitab's Facebook page. 21 February, 8AM

**Le Sherpa market**

Support local businesses. Shop for fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese, bread, meat products, honey, and much more. Saturdays, 8AM-12:30PM, Le Sherpa, Maharajgunj

**Kirtipur Photo walk**

Ourkirtipur is organising a photo walk to encourage people to explore Kirtipur through photography. Experience life on the hills and capture the moments on film. Registration required. 20 February, 7AM

**Salsa Party**

Dust up those dancing shoes and join Salsa Nepal's Fiesta Latina party for an evening of salsa dancing. Safety guidelines apply. 20 February, 6PM, House of Karim's, 9801224223

SHOWS

**Dandy Lions Live**

Bikalpa Art Cafe is hosting a special musical performance by indie band 'Dandy Lions', who will be performing originals as well as some covers. 19 February, 6PM, Bikalpa Art Cafe

**Kholo 2.0**

A seven-month long exhibition, Tulikaa's Kholo 2.0—A Cycle Of Life, will be the longest exhibition in Nepal so far, displaying artworks of 28 upcoming, established, and legendary Nepali artists in seven different genres. 12 February - 27 August, Van Gogh Gallery, Dhokaima Cafe

6 Paatra ko Ekalaap

Shilpee Theatre is back on stage with a new play, 6 Paatra ko Ekaalaap. The play is reflective of issues on caste discrimination, class difference, and gender-based discrimination. 19 - 22 February, Shilpee Theatre

**Perception**

Browse online through Kathmandu University, Department of Art & Design's BFA exhibition Perception. Explore creations from up and coming young studio artists and graphic designers. Visit <https://www.gallery.kuart.edu.np/events/perception> for details.

**Cycles of Impermanence**

Visit an artistic display of lithographs, etchings, and woodcuts by Kabi Raj Lama at Siddhartha Art Gallery. 19 February - 19 March, Babarmahal Revisited

DINING

**Fresh Bakes**

New in town, Fresh Bakes serves a myriad of baked items and cakes, doughnuts, and coffee. Pick up the Nutella-filled doughnuts or browse through other food products for breakfast, lunch or dinner. Rayamajhi Marga, 9887165566

**La Dolce Vita**

La Dolce Vita, an Italian restaurant, complete with the requisite red-checked tablecloth, is a popular choice for locals and tourists. Located at the heart of Thamel, opposite Kathmandu Guest House, escape from the bustle of the main chowk and relish the Italian cuisine. Thamel (01) 4700612

Raithaane

Raithaane, celebrating and promoting often under-utilised local nutritious grains, is back with its winter menu. Take a gastronomic tour of Nepal. Patan, 9801002971

Jatra Cafe & Bar

Jatra offers a wide variety of Continental cuisine. Try the signature Veg Momo and Sukuti Pizza and enjoy the wonderful, cosy ambience with other delicious Nepali and Indian dishes on the menu. Thamel (01) 4256622

**The Village Cafe**

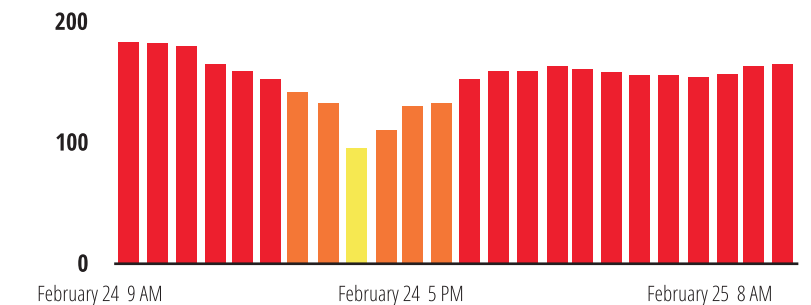
Head to The Village Cafe for fresh, delicious, home-made Newa cuisine. Order the much-loved sel roti and Yomari. Jhamsikhel Marga (01) 5540712



It is finally wrming up, and spring is in the air. Goodbye to a harsh, dry winter. Still expect some chills around Shivaratri in mid-March, but otherwise we are done with the cold. Temperature over the weekend will reach 22-23 in Kathmandu Valley, and the minima will also rise to 7-8. There is a low pressure circulation in central India that is blowing some moisture our way, and although it will bring some isolated cloud cover over Central Nepal, it will not translate into much rain.



AIR QUALITY INDEX



The graph above shows the AQI measurements at Phora Darbar in Kathmandu from Wednesday at 9AM till Thursday 8AM. The reason it is interesting is the improvement in AQI at 5PM on Wednesday. The brief shower flushed down pollutants. Just goes to prove that emissions and suspended particulates are what make Kathmandu's air hazardous, and how quickly they can be cleaned. The elevated minimum temperature in Kathmandu Valley in the coming week will make overnight inversion less pronounced, and this is good news since pollutants will not be trapped at ground level as much. However, vehicles in Kathmandu are still emitting a lot of muck, and the AQI will continue to be in the Unhealthy zone. We advise you keep your masks on to prevent breathing in the coronavirus and pollution particles.



OUR PICK

Dish Home is currently streaming a Korean historical drama *The King is in Love*, dubbed in Nepali. Based on a novel by Kim Yi-ryunga, this award-winning series set during the Goryeo dynasty follows an ambitious young monarch Won, his childhood friend Wang Rin and their romantic interest named San.



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नेपाल सरकार

सञ्चार तथा सूचना प्रविधि मन्त्रालय

सूचना तथा प्रसारण विभाग

Riding on waves of colours

Tulikaa Kala's seven-month long exhibition series will span 7 genres and 28 artists

● Shristi Karki

Inside Dhokaima Cafe's Van Gogh room, Aakash Pradhan's photo collages are like splashes of colour on black walls of a dark room.

They form part of an online art platform, Tulikaa Kala's solo exhibition series, Kholo 2.0. It makes him the first artist-of-the-week among the 28 classic and contemporary Nepali artists whose works are set to be on display in this unique show spanning seven genres in as many months, showcasing photography, ceramics, printmaking, contemporary, *Paubha*, sculpture, and new media art.

Visitors to the one-room gallery are immediately captured by 'Building Dreams', a collage of two men reconstructing ruins floating on clouds, with a fiery sun and the blankness of the night sky looming in the background. Pradhan makes his smaller framed photographs on his phone with a photo-editing mobile application.

His collages are a mix of social media posts, pictures sent by friends. Sunflowers are a recurrent motif and seem steeped in personal meaning. They loom like the sun over pictures of those displaced by the earthquake, or like a compass, show the way to a traveller on a motorcycle, or create a juxtaposition of a young woman's life in London and her roots in Nepal.

Clouds and the night sky also feature prominently, which he muses might be a subconscious reflection of his name on his art.

Pradhan's collages are vibrant, vivid and hold personal meaning and anecdotes. "That picture," he points to one photo, laughing as



he talks to visitors, "will always remind me of veg-momo."

A series of four simple, intact photographs titled 'Buju', features an elderly woman and the ruins of her home in Sindhupalchok, a striking contrast to the rest of his work on display. An aspiring filmmaker, Pradhan took the photos while working on an earthquake documentary.

Buju stares solemnly into the camera, hands placed carefully on her knees, barefoot. "We bought her a new pair of chappals, she promptly threw them away," recalls Pradhan. "I knew I had to photograph her."

Tulikaa co-founder and curator, Ujen Norbu Gurung says the gallery wanted to show that art is not stagnant, it is constantly evolving.

"Art should be really powerful, but the curation, layout, and space have to sync with the art, to accentuate it," Gurung says.

Indeed, much attention has been paid to the displays here, from the muted lighting to the back walls.

Sunniv Shanker Rajbhandry at Dhokaima says his Van Gogh room

was an ideal place to showcase Nepali art. "I had been to some of Ujen's other exhibitions, and thought the way he presents the artwork itself was unique. His vision is different, and he uses the space as much as the art itself," Rajbhandry added.

Tulikaa is not only organising the exhibition series for the next seven months, but providing an online platform to connect Nepal's

art community.

Gurung entered the art scene as a collector, but realised that Nepalis had barely scratched the surface of talent, and the art scene had untapped potential.

"We knew we had to come up with something radical to promote art to the masses," he says. "We thought that it might be the time for an online platform." Thus began the years-long process of research.

"The digital space offers more possibility for curating—we can experiment, and play around with the design and layout," Gurung explains.

He also realises how instrumental social media has been for artists to showcase their work and for audiences to discover it. "Platforms like Instagram are helping artists make money and build a brand," he says. And as if to evidence his point, a visitor comes over to introduce himself to Pradhan as one of his followers on social media.

The team planned to launch Tulikaa in early 2020 when the pandemic hit. "What we thought would be detrimental turned out to be quite helpful, because everyone was home and on the internet," says Gurung, who did 27 online shows during the lockdown.

Co-curator Samikshya Shrestha is optimistic about how platforms like Tulikaa, new art festivals and museums will help propagate Nepali art and artists.

Gurung adds, "We need a lot more institutions and lots of fresh ideas. We will catch up with the rest of the art world, we just need to ride on the right wave." 🇳🇵

Kholo 2.0 - A Cycle of Life, Tulikaa's 7-month long exhibition series at Dhokaima, is ongoing and ends on 27 August.

अटुट छ यो साथ जुनीजुनीलाई समृद्धिको सौगात, मेरी उनीलाई

मेरी उनीलाई

मुद्धती खाता

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MOFA

SAYONARA: Outgoing Japanese Ambassador to Nepal, Masamichi Saigo pays farewell visit to foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali at Singha Darbar on Sunday.



AMIT MACHAMASI

UP IN ARMS: Different groups representing political parties and indigenous entities, stage demonstrations against petroleum and oil prices' hike in Kathmandu on Wednesday.



UNDOF

PEACEKEEPERS: Lt Gen Ishwar Hamal, UN Disengagement Observer Force Commander visits Golan's Mount Hermon in Syria this week to meet Nepal Army officials posted in the Israeli occupied territory.



RATNA SHRESTHA/RSS

WORK IN PROGRESS: Over five years after it collapsed in the 2015 earthquake, killing 10 people, construction of Kathmandu's ancient pavilion, Kasthamandap gains pace.



UNDP

IN THE LINE OF FIRE: A community in Dolakha learn fire fighting, search and rescue and first aid skills crucial for emergency response during fires and earthquakes.

Nepal's health-tech industry is here to stay

A look at mobile apps that are spearheading a digital shift in Nepal's medical industry

If we learned anything from 2020, it is that nothing is more important than keeping fit and addressing health issues to avoid compromising one's immune system. Due to the lockdown and the pandemic, many people with health issues big and small did not or could not visit the doctor without the fear of getting infected. This gave rise to health and medical support apps that consolidate, modernise and



TECH-WAVE
Saniaa Shah

disrupt the Nepali medical industry, all at once. Helping connect the public to doctors and hospitals via just a few screen taps, these apps are a boon to those who cannot travel easily or struggle to make time for their family's or their own health. Here are a few of the many digital assisting apps that help us stay healthy and worry-free:

Hamro Doctor

Hamro Doctor is a super handy, app that offers all kinds of medical support and informative services. From professional online medical consultations with certified doctors, these online consultations are quick, convenient and half the price you pay to visit doctors physically. They offer information, including but not limited to an index of doctors according to field of medicine, a detailed menu of health checkup packages offered by private hospitals and ambulance service contact listing. There are also blog articles posted by doctors and live chat forums where users can ask specific health questions to doctors.

Dividing relevant health services into digital departments such as Coronavirus, Skin and Sex, Sugar, Thyroid and Heart, ENT, Cancer, and Women's Health and Pregnancy, makes it convenient for users to search for immediate help in the concerned department of health. All this, without the hassle of waiting rooms, standing in queues, wasting time filling paperwork and at the billing counter, etc. Additionally, a health feed with news and updates, blood donation information services and a feature that allows uploading of medical reports are also available on the app.

Not only does Hamro Doctor democratise and make expert medical support widely available for all Nepalis, it also makes socially awkward zones such as mental health problems and sex or genital related issues easier to address, thanks to the privacy and one-on-one direct nature of online consultation.

Jeevee

Jeevee is a professional, attractively designed one-stop health app that offers a range of health support services - online appointments, the option to upload your prescription to smoothly order required medicines. A database of over 1000 doctors offers 100% online consultations, and a convenient e-commerce section with over 20,000 products such as medical devices, baby care products, personal care items, ayurvedic medicine, orthopedic accessories, dental care stuff and more.

In case the user has difficulty finding the concerned category, they can also use the search bar on top to find the product they're looking for.

Positive customer reviews confirm that Jeevee does not charge delivery fees, allows ordering from different vendors in the shopping cart and also offers competitive prices that are often cheaper than the nearest drug store.

The Namaste Doctor feature has both free and pro (paid) models for patients to choose from, allowing them to consult with a doctor digitally without visiting them at their clinic. The pro version includes not 1 but 2 consultation sessions, 15 minutes of video calling, priority access, as well as lab and medical reports to make the consultation experience fully satisfying for the patient. Another useful feature of the app is the user's ability to create profiles of themselves as well as their family members, and have access to their medical records and history all in one place.

Cura Health

Cura Health was built to make sure that people can seek medical help without losing out on valuable time, digitally via this app. The app is designed to bridge the gap between patients and medical professionals. Unlike other health and medical apps, users cannot enter the home page without registering or signing

In order to increase its number of users, NepMeds has a referral and rewards system that helps users earn wallet balance when they introduce others to the app. The app keeps updating its home feed with quick health tips, and also promises additional unique features that will get introduced soon, such as a medicine reminder, BMI measurement tool, and medicine refill hints to make sure users don't miss a single day of regular medication.

Drugs Nepal

Drugs Nepal is a brilliant simple single-purpose app that offers free, detailed information about thousands of drugs available in Nepal. It's main advantage is that it is available for offline use after the first time of loading the app, by storing all the information locally. The user needs to simply open up the app when connected to WiFi or mobile data and the updated information gets automatically synced for offline use again.

This digital medicine directory allows users to search either by generic name or brand name of the drug. The directory looks appealing at first scroll, but the lack of information in the drug detail pages, like missing info on the word 'NULL' in certain categories, is admittedly disappointing. With improvement on the data entry side and minimum front-end tweaks, this purely informative app can be a less used but lightweight, to keep handy at all times. Because this app does not require two-way communication between parties and user inputs or information uploads yet, it is one-dimensional and uncomplicated.

Hamro Swasthya

The Ministry of Health and Population officially launched this app in April 2020 as a quick response measure to the global Coronavirus pandemic. It requests enabling of the Bluetooth feature to help improve contact tracing and track people who might accidentally spread Covid-19. It also offers a warning feature when the user is in close proximity to a device (individual), who is in the red zone.

It has received criticism for only doing the base minimum of Coronavirus tracking, updating the app with daily new cases, offering a few mobile numbers and hotline number for emergency Covid-19 support, a Covid-19 self-assessment online automated test, and a plasma donation form section that allows both donors and requesters to fill necessary information to donate or receive. Many users have complained online that it is not a complete, comprehensive, efficient app that asks the right questions to ensure that users feed information that will prove useful and accurate.

While the app is named Hamro Swasthya, it is essentially only a Coronavirus tracking and information sharing app, which is rather misleading. Aside from this minor concern, the Hamro Swasthya app has potential to turn into a handy resource that offers online appointment booking at government hospitals and free digital services. The assumption that government-led initiatives are not as modern, efficient and professional as the private sector could be challenged by improving on the product to create a super health app that benefits the average Nepali in a way that private sector apps cannot.



in, and providing all their vital statistics (height, weight, blood type, disease history, etc.), as well as an emergency contact number, a thoughtful touch that physical forms at hospitals make mandatory but other apps seem to have skipped.

With no bugs and a smooth interface, this app is the epitome of simplicity. However, without an extensive main menu and comprehensive search bar, it leaves the user wanting. With time, after building a larger database of doctors and medical practitioners, this app has the potential to go a long way. Until then, Cura enjoys customer loyalty and appreciation with satisfying booking services that help patients skip lines at hospitals, thus helping save time every time they make a trip to the doctor's.

NepMeds

NepMeds is a digital healthcare provider that is available on both web and mobile, offering medical shopping services and connecting users to doctors, laboratories, vaccination services, digital health record storage facilities, and tips on staying fit and happy. Currently, NepMeds operates in Kathmandu and Chitwan but aims to soon expect to other major cities of Nepal. NepMeds puts a focus on secure payment (128-bit SSL encryption) for e-shopping as well as affordable prices offered by reliable professional parties, to ensure customer satisfaction. The Health Library is a blog section that is filled with articles that bust myths, clear doubts, share benefits of certain foods - plus, keep the audience informed with knowledge on Coronavirus, dengue, fever and such super relevant health problems.

The lingering trauma of war

15 years after opposing sides in Nepal’s conflict made peace, a victim’s fight for truth and justice continues

● Pratibha Tuladhar

Last October, a letter came for Kiran Chaudhary from the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). It was Dasain, so the letter took several months for it to reach her husband’s home in Kailali.

The letter had made a recommendation to the government to pay Chaudhary NRs300,000 as compensation for her ordeal during the insurgency, and to arrest the perpetrators.

The conflict lasted from 1996-2006 with a loss of more than 17,000 lives. There are still 1,500 missing, and there have never been a specific number for those maimed or still suffering from mental trauma.

Kiran Chaudhary is one of them. It was in April 2002, four vanloads of government security personnel arrived at the village in Kailali district and entered her house. Chaudhary, a schoolgirl at the time, was accused of being a Maoist supporter.

“They accused me of being involved in the Lamki bombing, and asked me how many people I had killed,” recalls Chaudhary. For the next 38 days, she would be locked away, followed by torture and rape.

“I can only remember that everything was red with blood. My menstruation cycle had not begun then, but in detention, I started to bleed. I could not tell if I was menstruating or bleeding from being raped regularly.”

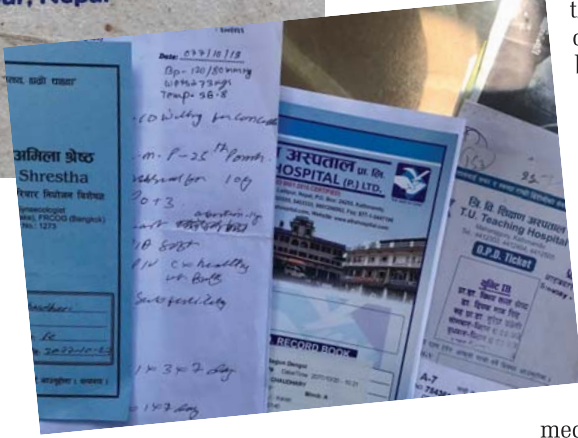
More than 18 years later, Chaudhary continues to suffer from the physical and psychological trauma. In her mid-30s now, she nurses a fractured pelvis from beatings, and the severe injuries caused to her reproductive organs by repeated rape.

“I have been married for more



The letter Kiran Chaudhary got last year from the NHRC informing her about compensation for torture and rape by the security forces during the conflict.

Kiran Chaudhary's bag is full of medical documents she has collected over the years.



than six years, and I cannot have children. When my in-laws ask, my husband is kind enough to say it is because of him,” explains Chaudhary. The couple still spends a quarter of their income on her medicines.

The letter from NHRC last year gave the couple some hope, and they spent some time in Kathmandu last week, visiting people at the Commission. But they came away confused about the process of getting the compensation money.

“We went to the Commission to ask them what we should do with the letter, and they said we have to go to Finance Ministry and Home Ministry, but we don’t

know anyone there,” Chaudhary said. She had already spent ten days in Kathmandu waiting in government offices, trying to get noticed.

But this is not new to her. Chaudhary has been in Kathmandu every few years following-up on her case. On most occasions, she walks from office to office, waits on people until she runs out of savings.

She registered a case with the NHRC against the perpetrators in 2013. But it was only after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up two years later that it received some attention. But with 63,000 other complaints, progress on individual cases like hers has been slow.

“It all depends on the Cabinet now,” an NHRC official told *Nepali*

Times, requesting anonymity. She added, “We have already issued a letter recommending the government pay her compensation and take action against some individuals in the security force who violated and tortured her.”

Meanwhile, Chaudhary’s life staggers along. A storm last April, blew away the thatched roof of her house and destroyed her documents, including her citizenship certificate.

“We received too much rain last year and the fry plopped out of the pond before they could grow to full size. It was a bad year for fish farming,” says Kiran’s husband Mahesh. “We grow just enough rice to last a few months, but with her medical expenses, we never have enough.”

Last year, Mahesh spent a few weeks going down to Lamki, learning Korean. He also cleared the Employment Permit System (EPS) exams, but with the pandemic, his migration plan is on hold. “We thought if I work abroad for a few years, we can save some money for her treatment.”

Kiran also requires physiotherapy for her back, but the nearest hospital is two hours’ bus ride away. Most days after field work, she cannot sit because of the pain.

Kiran Chaudhary was detained, tortured and raped in two different army bases in Kailali. When she tried to go back to school after her release, she was ostracised and forced to drop out. For a year, she

had to report to the police every day, and the villagers called her, “अमीले लगेको केटी”.


“So many people have died in my family in the last few years, I find myself very alone, with the same problems that never leave,” says Chaudhary, with a catch in her voice. She tries not to think about her past, and has tried many ways of moving on.

In 2012, she briefly joined Surya Bahadur Thapa’s Rastriya Janashakti Party, hoping that political affiliation would ease her life in some ways, but quickly realised she had no time for politics.

Peace is not peaceful From withdrawing inward to shun memories that would send her into fits, she has learned over the years to live with the past. But every time she hears of another woman who suffered similarly during the conflict, and the government doing nothing to help, she feels like the cycle is a perpetual one.

“I am not the only one, am I?” she asks, in reference to recent cases of rape. “Even the officer at the Commission said that there are so many like me. Will they even do something about us? If I get the money it would at least pay my medical bills.”

The NHRC official said the Commission has been following up on conflict-era cases, and has been pressuring the government to include individual cases like Kiran Chaudhary’s on the agenda.

“It would be easier for everyone if the government made the decision and sent the compensation amount to be released to the local governments so that they don’t have to keep coming to Kathmandu,” the officer says. “But with the political mess we are in, it doesn’t look like that will happen soon. And it’s always the victims who keep suffering.”  Some names have been changed.

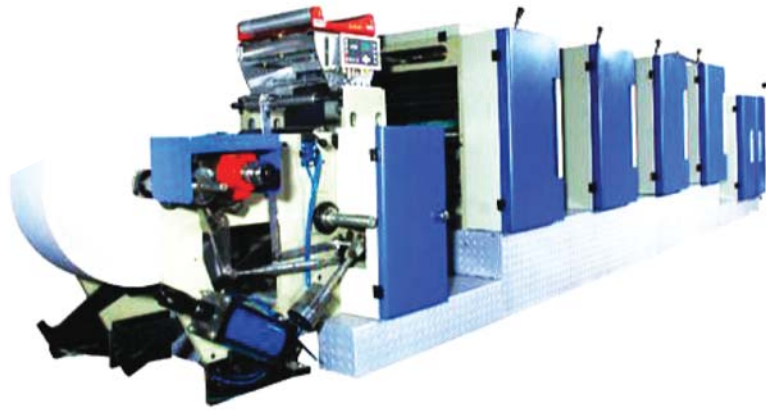
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From the frontlines of

Twenty-five years after the Maoist insurgency started on 13 February 1996, five reporters remember the people caught up in the 'People's War'



Helicopter flights from Surkhet were the lifeline for remote Kalikot district during the conflict years, before the highway was built.

KUNDADIXIT



One of many ruined buildings after two battles in Jumla during the decade long Maoist conflict 1996-2006.

Shivering with terror

We reached Pandusen of Bajura district in September 2003. Men were ploughing a terrace with two oxen and sowing wheat. We took out our camera and tripod. But when the men saw us, they fled. Later one of them told us, "We are afraid of strangers. We thought you were soldiers." He told us the army had come through and killed six people in the village, including Padam Bahadur Shahi.

At Padam Bahadur's house, relatives were in mourning. "He had gone to harvest paddy, he had done nothing wrong," his mother Koila told us, weeping. "They brought him here and hit him with rocks."

Padam's father Gorakh Bahadur said the soldiers even kicked their baby grandson, injuring him. "They led my son away and I followed," he told us. "They were beating him all the way, his teeth were scattered across the road, he was bleeding."

We climbed up the trail to Martadi. Within half-an-hour we

were at Ramlal Damai's house. He had been killed with a bullet in his head, and his relatives were wailing as they removed his body from the house. Further up in the village of Angaupani, we came across a whole village in mourning for six men who had been killed by soldiers the previous day.

We reached Kolti airfield where 12 police had recently been killed. Nearby, the army had killed another 10 villagers accusing them of being Maoists. A couple was in shock after their children aged 10 and five were killed after a Maoist pipe bomb they found in the forest exploded. All around us there was nothing but death and destruction.

A year later, I went to Kailali and Bardia which had the highest number of disappeared during the conflict. Their relatives are still waiting for truth and justice.

In war, people take to guns. But ultimately it is the gun that takes people away.

Mohan Mainali

Families torn apart

In February 2000, we travelled to the Maoist heartland of Rolpa, Rukum and Jajarkot. Along the way, we noticed police sentry posts located on treetops for safety. The policemen were playing carom with guns slung on their shoulders. We knew we were entering a war zone. In Libang, we visited Maoist prisoners in the Rolpa district jail. They spoke about being innocent, framed and tortured by the police. We interviewed a Maoist leader, Lokendra Bista. He told us the revolution was actually in response to state violence, but he said the resolution of the conflict was only possible through dialogue, not through violence.

In Khalanga of Rukum, there was also a lot of fear. Many who had been driven out or tortured by the Maoists had fled to the district headquarters for safety. We came across children cooking by themselves. One 11-year-old was kneading dough, but he wept as he told us: "The police killed our father and mother, I feel like drinking the blood from their hearts."

Four years later, we went to eastern Nepal. By this time, the army had joined



A father in Khotang in 2004, trying to stop his young son who had decided to join the Maoists.

the war and Maoist influence had spread throughout the country. One indelible memory of that time was the farewell of a distraught father in Chisapani of Khotang for his ninth grader student son, Kiran Bista.

In the video, the father clutches the boy's legs and does not want to let go. The boy tries to placate his father: "Don't do this, Dad. My friends all have fathers. We are all going to war, please don't do this."

A confident speaker, Kiran later told us later on camera: "I am joining out of my own free will because I have understood that we have to fight for our country."

When we got to Mugu, local Maoists detained us for 22 hours. But it was not till we got to Mudbara of Doti that we found out just how badly the war had affected children. The army had attacked a school in September 2004 after they found out the Maoists had gone there to recruit. Six of the Maoists were killed, but so were four students.

"I didn't even know I had been hit, I was unconscious when they took me to hospital," said one student Dharma Bhurtel. Her mother, Krishna Maya, broke down as she told us of the pain at seeing her only daughter wounded.

Bishnu Prasad was hiding inside a classroom with other students, when soldiers kicked the door in and started shooting. He was hit, and paralysed. "I like to go to school, but I cannot walk now."

Teachers were on the frontlines of the war, and nearly 220 of them were killed by both sides. "After the war started, we were caught in the crossfire. Whichever side fires the guns it is us teachers who get killed," Ram Bahadur Raut principal of the Chisapani Secondary School in Khotang told us then.

Dhruva Basnet

Power of the gun



Maoist women said carrying guns made them feel powerful.

Children would follow us everywhere. They were very loyal to the Maoist party. Even 10-year-old children had been so effectively brainwashed that they would speak in Maoist jargon, saying "When the revolution is successful, we will be also be rich and powerful." And they believed it.

We went to homes, and heard families talk about the fear of both the police and guerrillas. The Maoists had ordered every household to contribute at least one person to attend their revolutionary meetings and listen to speeches. We attended those cultural programs, as well. The Maoists cadre were full of enthusiasm and energy, singing and performing revolutionary dances about the liberation of the proletariat. Villagers watched with interest, but there was fear in their eyes.

The armed Maoists looked like they were really empowered. I asked some of them how it felt to be carrying a gun? They used to reply: "I feel powerful, now no one can do anything to me."

Amrita Lamsal

Nepal's war



Comrade Mukti at a village assembly in Pili of Kalikot in 2004 accused reporters of being spies.

that evening and paraded us on the stage, accusing us of being military spies and “royal mongrels”. The language they used during interrogation that night was straight out of the Khmer Rouge. Two years later, 55 soldiers were killed in a Maoist attack in Pili.

Finally let off the next day, we were detained again in Jubitha by 12-13 year-olds with guns. They could not read, and held our

press passes upside down. "We are now in the armed struggle phase of our revolution," said one youngster.

Along the trail, we passed a group of women guerrillas who gave us red salutes and gripped us in firm handshakes. It was a surprise to see such empowered young women in what was at that time, a part of western Nepal most steeped in patriarchy.

As we got closer to Jumla amidst the spectacular scenery of golden terraces of ripening paddy, the blue-green Tila River and the snow-capped Kanjiroba in the distance, there were signs of war damage. Ruins of destroyed homes, charred buildings, empty silent streets. There was no laughter from children, they peered at us from behind upstairs windows, no one talked to strangers. You could smell the fear in the air.

Kunda Dixit



Baburam Tamang, one of the 18 Maoist cadres executed by the Royal Nepal Army, in Ramechhap in 2003.

Overpowering truth

The National Human Rights Commission was sending a team to investigate the massacre of 18 Maoist cadre in Doramba of Ramechhap on 17 August 2003. It included former Chief Justice Krishna Jung Rayamajhi, former Attorney General Bhim Bahadur Bista, forensic physician Harihar Awasti, advocate Hari Phuyal and myself. We reached Doramba 11 days after the killings and found the fresh graves.

Local Maoists had gathered at the home of Yubaraj Moktan. The army encircled the house, and those who could, escaped. The others were rounded up, and were led off up towards the Sailung forest with hands tied behind their backs. The army unit was led by Major Ram Mani Pokhrel. Down in the village, people heard calls for help, and then gunshots.

The villagers helped us exhume the bodies, and Harihar Wasti went down to examine them one by one. He would dictate the details, which I noted down and shared with Hari Phuyal. The stench of rotting bodies was overpowering. Villagers would recognise the faces, and point to them, saying: "That is Bishnu Maya. That is Lila." Most had been shot at point blank range in the forehead.

A young man handed me a 35mm film roll. We developed it, and found images of the bodies had been thrown over the edge after being killed. And there was a photograph of a

local man named Baburam Tamang, the only one without a gunshot in the forehead, but in the arm. It looked like he had bled to death.

Villagers told us that night they had heard someone up the mountain call out for help “Ama, ama.” But they were too afraid to go up and check. We think it was a dying Baburam Tamang.

The villagers had later buried the bodies, wrapping them in cloth and flag. Nearby was a pile of half-burnt personal effects of those who had been killed. Among them, I found a notepad belonging to Bishnu Maya Thapa Magar, one of those who had been killed.



Twenty-five years after the Maoist insurgency started on 13 February 1996, five journalists who covered the war remember their own experiences reporting on the conflict.

The smell of fear

In October 2004, we took a helicopter from Surkhet to Kalikot, flying over the mountains of Dailekh and the Karnali River. On the left we could see Kotbada, where a year previously the Royal Nepal Army had killed 36 workers building an airfield, mistaking them to be Maoist guerrillas. We were in the heart of the conflict zone to understand how the war was affecting ordinary people in the Karnali.

Kalikot was remote then, as the highway was still being built. At the end of the first day's walk in Pili, we saw small children slither down from tree tops and scamper off to the village. We found out they were Maoist 'wholetimers' on sentry duty.

The local Maoists held a village gathering

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Zoomed out

Now that I have one year of practice of Zooming around, the wealth of experience I have amassed makes me a self-appointed expert on conducting webinars, video conferencing, e-meetings and bar crawling in augmented reality.

Which must be why some of your eager beavers out there want to know about do's and don't do's on Zoom. My general answer is that all behavioural traits we exhibit in physical meetings apply equally during virtual interactions.

So, for instance, if you are rude and grumpy in face-to-face meetings you are perfectly within your rights to be an e-jerk on Google Meet. The idea is to be your true self, and not deceive anyone by being someone you are not, just because you are meeting in cyberspace.

And that brings me to FAQs from readers who have specific queries, and in the interest of public harmony and world peace, I will endeavour to answer some of them below:

Q: What is the proper dress code during a Zoom meeting?
This depends on a case-by-case basis, and subject matter of the aforementioned Zoom conclave. For example, if one is partaking in an online Annual General Meeting of the All-Nepal Nudist Colony, it is perfectly a-ok to be stark raving naked. In fact, it would be a statutory requirement in such a situation to be completely disrobed on camera.
However, if it is your weekly Rotary Club

meeting, then it is acceptable to attend the Zoom in one's undies. The rule of thumb is that being topless is a big no-no, whereas no one will notice if you are bottomless. For gentlemen, the recommended dress code would be tie, business jacket, boxer shorts and flip-flops. For ladies, a satin party wear top with a comfortable micro-fibre hipster undergarment and pink indoor fur sandals. I hope that answers your question.

Q: What is the proper etiquette while Zooming on one's mobile?

The advantage about Zooming on a phone is that you are not tied to your desk, and can move about freely within the cosy confines of your own home. This adds a nice touch of intimacy and an element of informality to monotonous Board Meetings that go on and on. It is perfectly possible, therefore, that you have the urge to attend to a call from nature while on an endless Zoom call. If such a scenario should transpire it is perfectly acceptable to walk over to the loo while holding your mobile at selfie distance with one hand. However, it is considered rude to turn your video off while in the restroom.

Q: Is it also rude to be muted during an online class?

Yes, it is very rude. In fact, your entire undergrad class should be able to participate with the ambient sound in every home to give the lecture a degree of authenticity, and the professors an idea of what their students are up to. After all, communication is a two-way process and the teacher would like to hear important feedback from your dog. Or the vacuum cleaner.



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