

Disastrous planning

What will lift Nepal into a golden age will be our vast hydroelectric potential — or so we were told. Over and over again, the mantra has been repeated that we sit on 73,000MW of energy that will propel Nepal into a golden age of prosperity.

Students in school are told Mt Everest is in Nepal, even though we share it with China. They are not taught just how disaster-prone these mountains are. The Himalaya is the world's youngest mountain range, and its geology makes the terrain inherently prone to slope failure.



AMIT MACHAMASI

The Kosi has some of the highest sediment loads of any river in the world because of the constant weathering of the mountains. Himalayan topography blocks the southwest monsoon, forcing it to dump 80% of annual precipitation on its slopes in three months.

All this puts Nepal at risk from landslides and avalanches, earthquakes and cloudbursts, flash floods and cataclysmic bursting of dammed rivers. These natural phenomena have been happening for millions of years. They became 'disasters' only when humans started settling along the foothills.

We may be tempted to conclude after last year's deadly landslide season and last week's devastating floods that these disasters are getting worse. But are they? It may just be that more people are settling in high-risk areas, and visuals of the destruction can be immediately disseminated because of the spread of media.

At least 12 hydropower projects that were either under construction or already feeding electricity to the grid, were knocked out of action in Central Nepal on 12-14 June. One of them was the 44MW Super Madi project in Kaski. The damage runs into billions of rupees, and it will take at least a year for many of them to be rebuilt.

The much-delayed \$500

million Melamchi water supply project has been badly damaged at its headworks, and although it was officially inaugurated in April, its real operation may now be pushed back by six months.

On 18 June, China sent word that the Rongsi River had been dammed by a landslide and it could affect the Tama Kosi valley downstream in Nepal. Dolakha authorities alerted the population. Luckily, the landslide was cleared and the danger passed. But for a time, the Rs70 billion 456MW Upper Tama Kosi project that was slated for opening next

month, was at high risk.

The only good thing we can say about the destruction so far this rainy season is that it could have been much worse. It has warned us to be much more careful about where and what kind of infrastructure we build, ensuring proper engineering, construction that does not cut corners. It is a wake-up call

that we ignore these moving mountains at our own peril.

Just as poorly-designed roads are being constructed haphazardly, hydropower licenses have been issued in geologically fragile sites without vetting, and with little risk assessment of future maximum

flood intensity. Allowing river beds, slopes and the Chure to be plundered will mean worse disasters in future. The climate crisis has added the threat of glacial lake outburst floods to an already high-risk region.

Hydropower plants have to be spread out so that if one is knocked out, it will not have a serious impact on national supply. If Upper Tama Kosi was already operational and had been damaged by the flash flood from China, it would have taken out nearly one-third of Nepal's present power capacity.

The other lesson is not to put all our energy eggs in the hydropower basket. Nepal now needs a more flexible energy mix with cheaper and quicker to install on-grid solar farms generating power for daytime use. This will reduce over-dependence on hydro-energy, and lessen the pressure to ruin more rivers by disturbing their natural flow and endangering biodiversity. Times like these call for a political leadership that understands Nepal's multiple-disaster risks, how they are being exacerbated by human intervention, and prepares to minimise the impact.

This monsoon is a wake-up call. We ignore these moving mountains at our own peril.

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Say no to drugs

This Saturday 26 June is International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. Drug use is responsible for at least 750,000 deaths per year worldwide and 585,000 premature deaths by increasing the risk of particular disease and injury.

History is replete with crimes committed under the influence. Writing in his eyewitness account, the late neurosurgeon Upendra Devkota who operated on then crown Prince Dipendra following the royal massacre said that the real conspiracy of the time was traffickers turning the youth of this country into drug addicts, the one that didn't even spare the royal family.

20 years later, drug abuse continues to be a challenge and according to official records, Nepal has over 130,000 drug users. Excerpts from the testimony published in Nepali Times issue #48 22-28 June 2001:

The way the army chap was driving, I knew something was very wrong with the Crown Prince. At the hospital, there were military personnel swarming at the gate, people were running around. I was shown into the hall and taken to the first patient on the left. He was extremely pale, blood-splattered beige kamij and suruwal, grey hair, a Sai Baba locket around his neck, he was being ambulated. I didn't know who this patient was, but I knew from a distance that he was lifeless. I looked at his eyes, felt his pulse, and said he's gone.



Dr Khagendra Shrestha then arrived and took me diagonally to the other side of the hall, murmuring: "Disaster, everybody has been massacred." There was a body covered with a sheet. He lifted the sheet and said, "This is Her Majesty the Queen." The whole upper part of her head had been blown off. Before I could react, he took me to the next stretcher on the floor, and lifted the sheet, and said: "This is His Royal Highness Prince Nirajan, gone already. This is Princess Sarada."

By this time, I'd seen enough. He took me to the next stretcher where a patient was still being resuscitated and he said, "Princess Sruiti".

At last I saw someone still alive. But she was in poor shape, but there were doctors looking after her and there was no head injury, so Dr Shrestha rushed me off back to the same first very pale patient with the Sai Baba locket I had seen while coming in, and he said: "This is His Majesty."

...Now, if you ask me if there was a conspiracy, I should say, not directly. But there is a conspiracy in this country to turn our youth into drug addicts. Even the royal family is not safe. This is a conspiracy by the mafia and the traffickers.

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

ONLINE PACKAGES



THE COST OF SECOND WAVE

Back in March, at the tail end of the first wave, Himalmedia's tv magazine *Saglo Samaj* interviewed farmers, tourist guides, hotel operators and taxi drivers most affected by the lockdowns. This week, the team revisited the same people to find out what has become of them. *Saglo Samaj* is aired on DishHome Channel 130 every Monday evening at 8:30pm. Report: *page 10-11*.

2021 MONSOON

Nepal's monsoon is always a grim reminder of how our development placed people and property in harm's way ('Monsoon hits Nepal with a bang', [nepalitimes.com](#)). #NepalMonsoon

Prakash Khadka

● The monsoon has just begun in Nepal but lives have already been hit hard! Wondering if early warning system is just a token.

Sushmita Dawadi

● The DoMH had been sending out persistent warnings about heavy rainfall all this week, but even it seems to have been caught by surprise by the intensity of the rainfall and ... heaviest precipitation in the trans-Himalayan districts Manang, Mustang and Dolpo.

Surendra Phuyal

MALNUTRITION

A very good article ('Nepal's epidemic of hunger', Anita Bhetwal, #1066). This is so incredibly important for the human development in Nepal and hence future of Nepal.

Bijaya Rai

● Ordinary people are dying with hunger but our politicians are busy building their individual empires.

Chandra GT

COVID CRISIS

Exemplary leadership ('Nepal's local governments lead from the front', Masta KC, #1066). Hats off to Mayor Bhupendra Rai and Deputy Mayor Sapana Rai. This is the kind of leadership people want and deserve in local communities. Bless you!

Kul Gautam

● The situation remains critical in Nepal ('Anger grows in Nepal over Covid vaccine delays', Alisha Sijapati, *page 4*). Thanks for your support of the Covid relief programs we are funding. It all helps.

Friends of Nepal- Adelaide Inc

● I don't think it's fair blaming other countries for the mess we are in. It's because of the dirty politics, corruption and inefficiency of this government. Sleeping and waiting for donations.

Rishi Saraf

● Why is Nepal prepared to purchase vaccines from China (and previously from India) - with associated NDA's - yet waits for donated vaccines from elsewhere?

Philip Holmes

● Nepal's choice to fight for Britain and India was/is voluntary and driven by economic needs. While it would be great if these countries gave some consideration to this, we can't expect this as a matter of right or even an obligation on their part.

Krishna Joshi

HERNE KATHA

I'm addicted to *Herne Katha*. It makes you sad, makes you think, makes you happy and inspires you at times ('The extraordinary lives of ordinary Nepalis', Shristi Karki, [nepalitimes.com](#)). The best Nepali platform ever produced!

Prajal Pradhan

● The mainstream media doesn't prioritise stories of the common people anymore and has distanced itself from the public, *Herne Katha* has bridged that gap. Nepali society has never been able to identify the potential and knowledge of the marginalised, Dalit and women.

Shiva Hari Gyawali

● In this program, we get to know the insights of actual Nepal, the socio cultural and economic stratifications.

Roshan Magar

● *Herne katha* is my favourite program, I become cry baby every time I watch it. Highs and lows of life well presented just in few minutes' clips.

Prakriti Bhandari

● Excellent production values, they're really stories worth watching.

Santosh Ranjitkar

WILDLIFE ON THE MOVE

An exciting report on the elephants of Bardia National Park in Nepal ('Bardia's wild elephants are also on the move,' Salik Ram Chaudhary, #1066). When the monsoon starts, the herds go on hiking as they have been since ancient times and return to Nepal from nearby India. They use Khata Wildlife Corridor connecting sanctuaries in India and Nepal, but also occasionally move around the populated environment and cross a village or two.

Aliya

WHAT'S TRENDING



When it rains, it pours

by *Kunda Dixit*

Nepal is being battered by crises upon crises and layers upon layers of calamities. While none of this was unexpected, preparedness has been neglected amidst political turmoil. Read the full report on [nepalitimes.com](#) and join the online discussion.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Most commented

Nepal's local governments lead from the front

by *Masta KC*

Elected village heads in rural Khotang are taking matters into their own hands, leading by example and working directly on the Covid frontlines. Learn more about their exemplary work in this report on our website.

Most popular on Twitter

Nepal's wild elephants are also on the move

by *Salik Ram Chaudhary*

Conservation success means tigers and elephants are using jungle corridors for annual monsoon migration. Find out about Bardia in this personal account of rare wildlife sightings.

Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

There are crises within crises, layers upon layers of calamities. Disasters in Nepal come in waves by @kundadixit.



Sujan Dhakal @SujanDhakal90

And the biggest disaster is that the Oli Govt failed to make the country ready to deal with any such crisis amid natural calamity. And as far as COVID is concerned, we are living on alms while procurement of vaccines and other arrangements is a far cry...



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Since we have hit a dead-end on Covid vaccines, we might have better luck with getting anti-corruption vaccines so we can inoculate members of the executive and legislative branches. The Ass: Anti-corruption vaccine for Nepal.



Navita Srikant @NavitaSrikant

Those of us who design #Anticorruption Vaccine for #Nepal unfortunately deal with variant mutating rapidly due to persistent breeding ground where the "Giver" leaves no stone unturned to tempt the "Taker" in Grand Corruption cases. #RaiseTheEthicsStandards



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Nepal hit by disaster during climate talks. As delegates prepare for the Glasgow summit, country suffers another climate-induced disaster.



Mathew Joseph C @mathewjosephc1

Climate change affects countries like Nepal very badly. International society must take note of this seriously. #climatechange #Nepal



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Two months after the Art Institute of Chicago returned a stolen 800-year-old stone sculpture, more of Nepal's antiquities have been located at the museum, raising questions about how they got there. @AlishaSijapati reports.



Erin L. Thompson @artcrimeprof

In the last two months, four stolen sacred artworks from Nepal have been identified in the Alsdorf/@artinstitute collection. It's time to look real hard at what remains there.



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Kathmandu's #Water Day. Under a #Covid lockdown, #Kathmandu marks Sithi Nakha, the daylong festival to clean its wells and water sources. Photos: @MachamasiAmit



Sujeev Shakya @sujeevshakya

A very important day to also pay gratitude to nature



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Nepal urgently needs to inoculate 1.4 million people above 65 with second doses, then at least 70% of its adult population with 40 million doses soon. Anger against Nepal government, India and Britain grows. @AlishaSijapati reports.



dharma adhikari @dharmaadhikari

bungled coordination; such a sad state of affairs. have a point man of public standing, a vaccines envoy of sorts, to follow up on promises, perhaps Dr Ruit fits the bill?



ART @AmulyaSir

Probably by 2023! If luck holds out and all the Western hoarders have overfilled their vaccines appetites.

Nepali Times

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Lonely wait of Nepal's elderly for 2nd dose

Running out of time for their second doses of the Covid-19 vaccine has added to the woes of Nepal's seniors

● Deepali Shrestha

In the narrow alley of Maru Tole in the heart of Kathmandu, 77-year-old Sulochana Pradhan spends her days watching tv news, waiting for word on the second dose of the Covishield vaccine.

In March, when Nepal became one of the first countries in the region to start Covid-19 vaccinations with Covishield vaccines for people over 65, Pradhan was among 1.4 million elderly Nepalis who got the jabs. But it has now been 12 weeks, and time is running out for the second dose to boost their immunity against the coronavirus.

"I am scared to even go out, and my relatives have been helping me in procuring supplies. Maybe getting the second dose would have been easier if I had taken the Chinese vaccine instead," says Pradhan who is a childless widow.

Since the lockdown she has not been able to even visit her extended family. She passes the day watching television, or talking to the children of the family that rents her downstairs apartment.

"Last year, I wasn't that concerned, and I also didn't understand much about this disease. But this year, I saw how many people were suffering because of hunger and the new strain of Covid-19. This time the situation is serious, and I am worried," says Pradhan.

Only 8.5% of Nepal's 30 million people have received the first dose



MONIKA DEUPALA

of vaccines, and just 2.4% have got both shots. Over 300,000 elderly people above 65, mainly in the rural areas, have yet to receive even their first dose. This week, Lalitpur municipality is inoculating people above 75 with second doses from a leftover stock.

"Many elderly Nepalis are waiting for their second doses of Covishield, but a lot more have not even got the first dose of Chinese VeroCell because of inadequate response from the government," says Krishna Murari Gautam of the non-profit, Ageing Nepal. "The elderly who have got both doses tend to be from privileged and affluent sections of society."

Aside from vaccines, the pandemic and the nationwide lockdown has been most challenging for the elderly, who are living alone

or only with their partners. Apart from the fear of the coronavirus, many have other pre-existing ailments. In Biratnagar, Sita Kafle and her husband Mukesh*, both in their sixties, showed Covid symptoms last year. Sita's symptoms were mild but Mukesh, who is a liver patient, recovered after much difficulty. Their only daughter lives in Australia, but was unable to come home due to the travel ban. Neighbours and relatives helped out.

"We couldn't go out since both of us had the virus. It was difficult," recalls Sita. Once they recovered, both got vaccinated with Covishield but like Pradhan, they are also awaiting the second dose.

Before the pandemic, the couple used to travel to India every three months for Mukesh's follow-up at a hospital there. But as the second

wave gripped India, they had to get checkups in Biratnagar. But even that has not been possible now because of the lockdown.

"It is very risky," says Sita. "For now, we are in regular contact with the doctor. But if something happens, things are going to be very tough. We would have felt safer with the second dose."

Even before the pandemic, Sulochana Pradhan had a host of ailments that included chronic neck pains and regularly occurring dizziness. But she has to deal with a deep sense of foreboding not just about her previous afflictions but also Covid-19.

"When I hear the news about people dying of hunger and because of Covid, it scares me. I don't know what is happening," says Pradhan.

Paras Pokharel, a professor at

the School of Public Health and Community Medicine in BPKIHS Dharan says the elderly are facing the double burden of physical ailments and psychological stress.

"Living alone at a time like this can be dangerous. It is not so much the fear of dying, what worries them most is dying alone," Pokharel adds.

For the elderly who depended on daily wages for income to take care of themselves, the lockdown has been even more disastrous. Like for Bimala BK, who lives alone in a small rented room in Dharan. For the past 20 years, she has been working as a house help. Her husband left her 15 years ago, and her only son is working in India.

"After the lockdown there is no work, I just stay home doing nothing. If this continues, people will start dying of hunger," says BK who has been to her Ward office several times, but to no avail. "Last year they gave us two bags of rice and lentils, but this time there has been nothing."

She has been living on the generosity of her neighbours and a sister who lives nearby. Like millions of other Nepalis, Bimala BK has not been vaccinated, and it will probably be a long time before her time comes.

"Even my son is out of a job because of the situation in India. I am all alone here, but I have to eat, but what can I do?" she says.

Homes for the elderly like the Bishranti Mandhir Bridha Ashram in Dhankuta are also running out of money as private donations dry up to care for its 55 elderly residents.

"Before we were visited by multiple philanthropists daily, but these days they do not come anymore," says Kamala Dahal, a resident at the Ashram.

Says Krishna Murari Gautam of Ageing Nepal: "For the residents of many old age homes, vaccines are a future luxury. Their immediate need is food." 🇳🇵

*Some names have been changed.

prabhu BANK



BUDDHA AIR

Flights to restart

A cabinet meeting on Tuesday has decided to reopen limited domestic flights. In the first phase, only 50% domestic flights will be allowed to operate. The government has also decided to allow 25 regular international airline flights from this week, starting with connections to and from Kathmandu to Doha, Istanbul, Dubai, Dammam, Kuwait City, Muscat, Kuala Lumpur, Seoul, Tokyo and Chengdu. The decision is expected to allow thousands of Nepali workers stranded in the Gulf, or who have not been able to return to their jobs to do so.

Khalti Euro 2020 scheme

Digital wallet Khalti has launched a Predict and Win campaign for Euro 2020 wherein users who participate with the most correct predictions stand a chance to win Rs25,000. Any KYC verified user can participate by loading at least Rs200 from their linked bank account. While loading funds, one must write EURO2020 in the remarks section. Each day, 10 correct predictions will get 50% off Khalti coupons.



Kathmandu eases lockdown

After nearly two months, the lockdown in Kathmandu Valley has been relaxed after the number of infections started to go down, but public health experts warn of a surge if precautions are not followed. Most other districts except Khotang and Morang are loosening their restrictions, following the capital's example.

The infection rate has not come down compared to the start of the lockdown on 29 April. Despite this, keeping the economic impact of the lockdown in mind, the government loosened restrictions, allowing odd-even private vehicles on the roads, shops to open on alternate days. A recent survey showed that more than half of employed people in Nepal had lost their jobs during this lockdown, and there are fears of widespread hunger and poverty.



Japan aid

In addition to the oxygen generators already handed over to the government, the Embassy of Japan has signed the agreement with the Nepal to procure 114 additional oxygen generators under Japanese Grant Aid.



New Hyundai Palisade

Hyundai is set to launch two variants of its new flagship vehicle, the Premium SUV Palisade, in Nepal. The new Hyundai SUV includes 2.2-litre diesel engine options that generate 200PS power and a torque of 1750 ~2750rpm. Price starts at Rs20 million.



Rs97 billion for new hydropower

The Investment Board Nepal this week approved foreign investment worth Rs97 billion for two hydropower projects, the 285MW Tamor and 139.2MW Lower Manang on the Marsyangdi. India's SJVN is also being issued a survey permit for a detailed feasibility study of the 679MW Lower Arun project in Sankhuwasabha.

Likewise, the meeting directed the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation to improve the laws to address the ambiguity regarding the survey permission for the Tamor Reservoir Hydropower Project (756 MW). It also formed a committee to study and prepare a blueprint for the development and investment of the West Seti and SR-6 joint hydropower projects.



Monsoon relief

Tilanga Institute of Ophthalmology on 18 June provided relief consisting of daily essentials to the people in Melamchi and Helambu in Sindhupalchok impacted by the floods and landslides. It consists of 3,650kgs of rice, 800 packets of ORS, 700kgs of beaten rice, 200 antigen test kits, and other items.



Climate risk

Nepal's delegates at virtual meetings preparing for a Climate Summit in Glasgow in November this week raised the issue of risk from the climate crisis, and said that due recognition was not being given to mountain ecosystems and helping poorer countries to deal with the impact of the climate crisis in the run-up to the Conference of Parties 26 (CoP26).

Anger grows in Nepal over Covid vaccine delays

“Nepalis died for Britain and India, now they are letting us die.”

● Alisha Sijapati

Outrage is growing against India and Britain, despite Nepal’s long association with their militaries, for not responding to the country’s desperate pleas for vaccines as the second wave of Covid-19 ravages the country.

Critics on social media and press commentators have reminded India and Britain that Nepal’s nationals have shed their blood to defend them through wars in the past two centuries, and Nepal’s Rana rulers had been particularly generous in donating money to institutions in British India and the UK itself.

On 15 June, Gurkha veterans in kilts and blowing bagpipes staged a demonstration in the heart of London, with family members carrying banners that read ‘We fight for you. Help us fight Covid-19 in Nepal’, and ‘Gurkha Lives Matter’.

In May, British celebrities, war veterans, mountaineers, public health specialists and vaccine researchers wrote an open letter to Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab appealing for emergency medical equipment and vaccines to Nepal. They included Sir Jeremy Farrar, Sarah Gilbert, Andrew Pollard, Sir Chris Bonington, Joanna Lumley, Michael Palin, Gen Sir Sam Cowan, and many others. Gurkha veteran Capt Ram Bahadur Limbu, one of only five living recipients of the Victoria Cross, signed the letter from his home in Kathmandu. A similar appeal was made to the US government through the Covid Alliance for Nepal as far back as early May.

Although Britain, the United States, and other European countries continue to fly in oxygen generators, PPEs and medical equipment to Kathmandu on relief flights, they have not sent what is most needed now: vaccines.

China, on the other hand, has donated 2 million doses of its Sinopharm VeroCell vaccines, and Nepal is poised to order another 4 million jabs from Beijing.

To be sure, Nepal was gifted 1 million doses of the Covishield AstraZeneca by India as early as March as a part of its ‘neighbourhood first’ policy, and the government paid an advance to the Serum Institute India for another 2 million doses. Only 1 million were delivered.

Britain also co-funded 2.268 million Covishield vaccine doses to Nepal via the COVAX facility, but only 348,000 were delivered in April before India stopped its export.

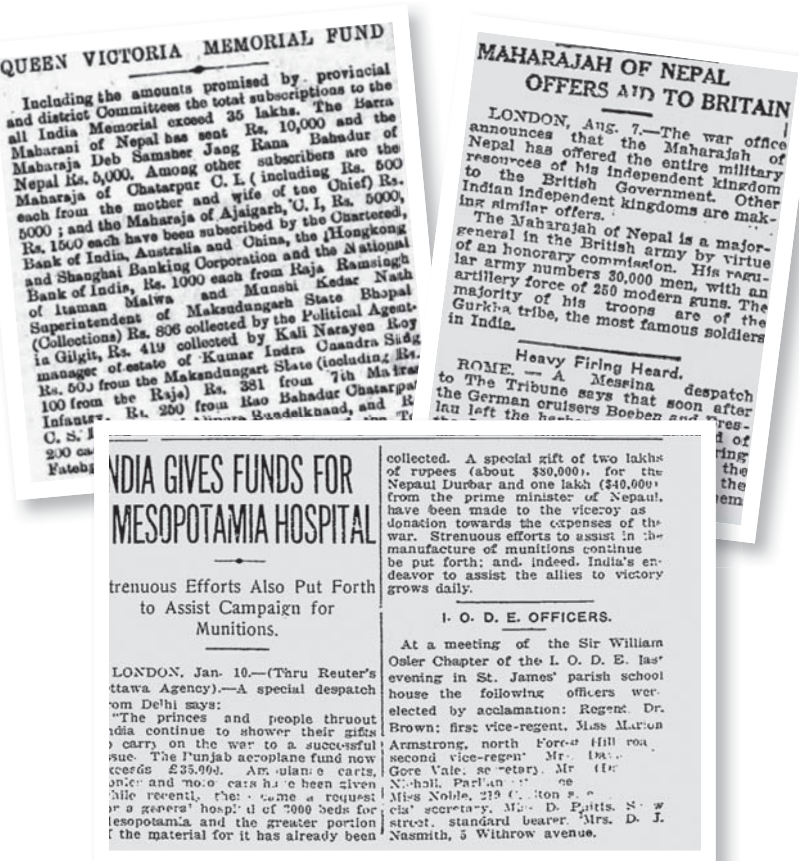
Kathmandu has repeatedly made special appeals to New Delhi to at least send the remaining 1 million Covishield doses it paid for, and to Britain to rush supplies so that 1.4 million elderly Nepalis who have been waiting for their second doses now for more than 12 weeks get their jabs before their immunity runs out.

Even though some individual European countries are willing to donate their surplus or unused AstraZeneca vaccines directly to Nepal, the EU has insisted that it go through the COVAX channel which has pledged 100 million doses by the end of the year. But that would be too late for those waiting for second doses.

Last month, US President Joe Biden announced that 7 million doses will be given to countries in South and Southeast Asia, but there is no mention of when and how many are for Nepal. The G-7 leaders last week pledged another 1 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines, half of it to be delivered by end-2021. But



British Gurkha veterans and their families march in London on 15 June, asking the British government, among other demands, to rush vaccine supplies to Nepal.



giving away what was essentially taxes paid by poor Nepalis in the name of diplomacy. It is time for Britain to return the favour.”

Another newspaper clipping from *The Toronto World* in 1916 reports on a ‘special gift’ of Rs200,000 from the Nepal government and Rs100,000 from the prime minister personally to Viceroy Lord Chelmsford in India as donation towards the British war effort.

Although the second wave appears to be cresting in Nepal, just as it has in India, the disease is still spreading in the community in the remotest parts of the country where there are scanty testing or treatment facilities. Public health officials say the death toll and infection rate is probably three times higher than what is officially reported.

On Wednesday, 2,421 confirmed Covid-19 cases were reported nationwide, with 81 fatalities. This pushes the total number of deaths so far to 8,894. There are still 50,520 active cases, with most in home isolation, but there are 734 in ICU and 213 on ventilator support.

On 22 June, after two months of lockdown, the authorities eased restrictions with ‘smart lockdown’ rules. However, public health experts say that relaxing the rules when only 4% of the population has been vaccinated is sure to mean another surge.

After inoculating the 1.4 million people above 65 who are waiting for their second doses, Nepal needs to vaccinate at least 70% of its adult population for which it will need more than 40 million doses soon.

Former United Nations Under Secretary-General and Nepali diplomat Gyan Chandra Acharya told *Nepali Times*, “I don’t see a possibility of Nepal getting vaccines from India now, but the West is hoarding more vaccines than it needs. What is stopping them from sending the urgently

needed second doses to Nepal?”

What rankles archivist Khaderi the most is the historical injustice of it all. Having studied Nepal-Britain relations, he is most disappointed at the way Britain is treating Nepal. The UK may be Nepal’s main donor today, but in the past successive Rana prime ministers lavished presents on the British royalty.

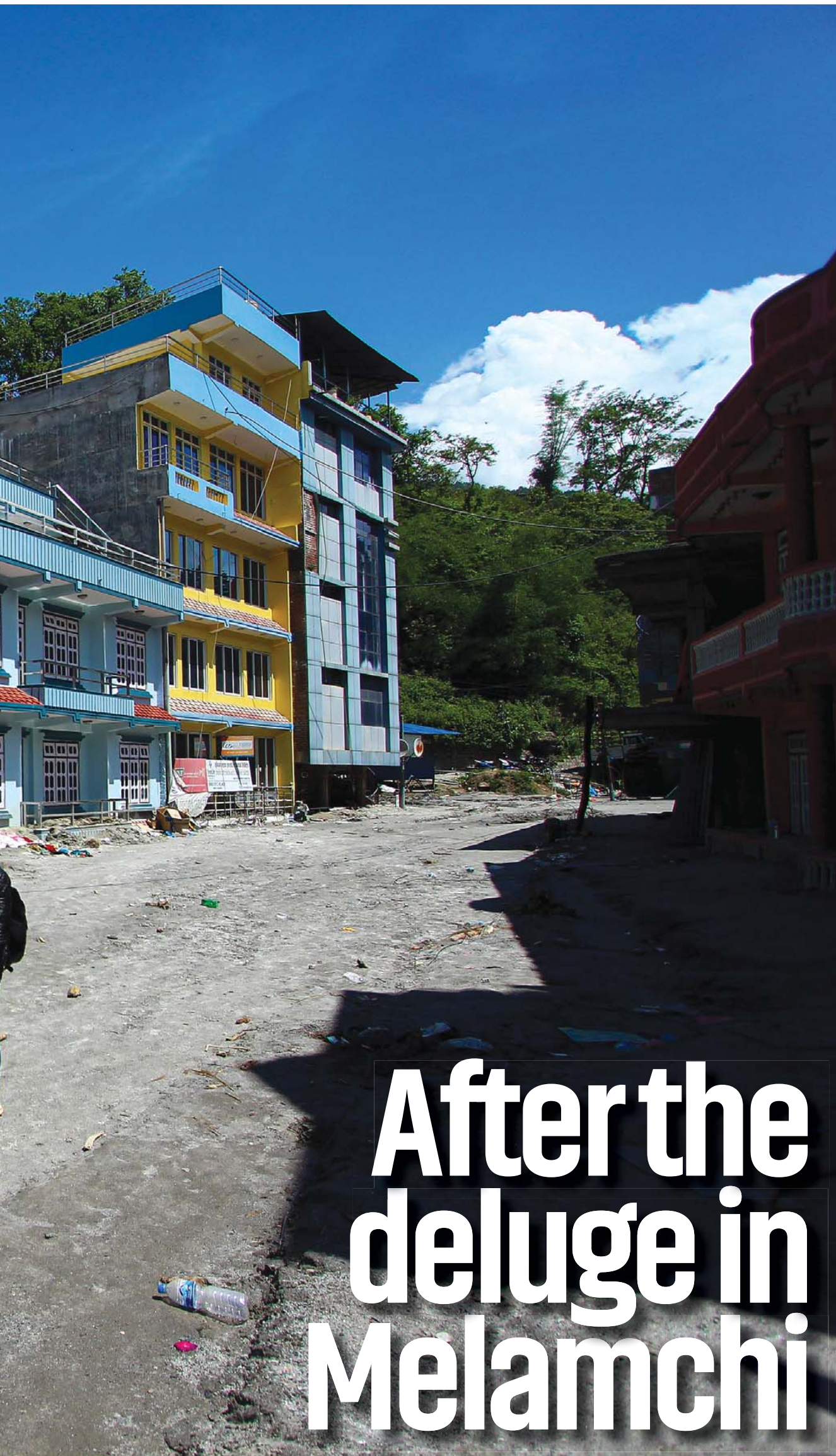
Khaderi, who lives in Qatar, has uncovered archival material about Bir Shumshere Rana gifting 14 gold coins to Queen Victoria, even Jang Bahadur, who was the first royalty from the Subcontinent to visit Britain in 1850, showered expensive presents on Queen Victoria. Later, Dev Shumshere contributed Rs15,000 to Queen Victoria’s Memorial Fund.

“It is really disappointing to see Britain and India being so unwilling to help Nepal despite the sacrifices of our soldiers, the generosity and flattery that our rulers lavished upon them in the past, and to this present day through Gurkha recruitment,” he says.

Indeed, what is most telling for foreign policy analysts is that despite the ‘special relationship’ between Britain and Nepal and the military ties, not a single British prime minister has ever visited Nepal even though British royals have been here. Public health expert Sameer Mani Dixit of the Centre for Molecular Dynamics says the nature of Nepal’s second wave is changing. While hospitals in Nepal needed oxygen during the peak of the infections in May, now it is vaccines that is most needed.

“Nepal has historical relations with India and the UK, but it is disappointing that particularly Britain has not done much in terms of vaccines. There have been pledges, but when will they get here? In 2023?” he asks. “Why get stuck with COVAX, Britain should send us doses directly since we helped defend their Empire. We are not begging. Nepalis died for Britain, now Britain should help Nepalis live.”





ALL PHOTOS: AMIT MACHAMASI



Danger still lurks, as Melamchi picks up the pieces after last week's great flood

● **Amit Machamasi** in Sindhupalchok

Sambhu Kumar Mandal is from Sitamarhi in Bihar. Like hundreds of other migrant workers from India, they have been in Nepal working in reconstruction jobs after the 2015 earthquakes.

What they did not realise is that the district most affected by those earthquakes would be ravaged by yet another disaster six years later – the deadly flash floods on 14-15 June.

Mandal and dozens of other carpenters, plumbers and painters had been working in Sindhupalchok, hired by people rebuilding homes that had been destroyed in 2015. One week after the massive flood, some of those same houses they helped rebuild are buried up to the second floor in sediment.

Ironically, Indian migrant workers have filled jobs left vacant by young Nepali men from here who themselves have migrated to Qatar or Malaysia.

“When we crossed the bridge after work on Tuesday, the water was rising, but we didn’t think anything of it,” Mandal, 38, recalls. “We cooked, ate and went to sleep, but suddenly at night there was a big commotion and we saw the water rising. We ran to high ground and saved our lives. We could not sleep the whole night.”

On Tuesday, Mandal and a dozen other Indian workers were

helping their employers dig up valuables in rooms that are buried in silt up to the ceiling. Others are busy retrieving furniture and anything else that can still be used.

The street of Melamchi Bazar is buried in mud, there are people’s possessions scattered everywhere, and by the river that now flows through homes, there is the stench of bodies.

Officials here estimate that at least 50 people are still missing, although the official death toll in Sindhupalchok is 17, among them Chinese, India and Nepali staff of the Melamchi Water Supply Project upstream.

Satellite images from Sentinel and Planet Labs show that landslides triggered by the 2015 earthquakes in the Melamchi and Indrawati basins (see map) grew bigger during heavy precipitation on 15 June as the monsoon broke over Nepal.

There is a very large slope slide below the village of Dongdhing that appears to have blocked the Melamchi River, and it was the river breaking through this and other landslides that caused the devastating flood downstream.

In Melamchi, the municipality’s head of social security Yadav Khanal is busy collecting data of fatalities, and damage to classify families according to the urgency of their need. He is also coordinating three meals a day and blankets for 30 families with 300 individuals who are sheltered in a school above the town.

“We are doing what we can, but because the road up the river has been cut off, we still have not heard from outlying areas about casualties and damage,” Khanal says.

There is more rain forecast, so the municipality is on high alert since the unstable slopes could block the Melamchi and Indrawati Rivers again. It is also trying to use excavators to divert the river to its original channel, away from the town.

Many of Sambhu Mandal’s colleagues, including a carpenter who lost all his belongings when his room was submerged, have returned to Bihar. But he and a few others are staying on since they are still needed by employers for mopping up.

“We will also go to Kathmandu in a few days, and try to find work there,” says Mandal in smooth Nepali from the years he has spent here. “After that I may even come back to Melamchi, since there is bound to be more reconstruction work.” 🇳🇵



(Left to right) Sambhu Kumar Mandal is a painter, but is helping his employer dig out belongings from the mud. He is going to Kathmandu, but hopes to return to Melamchi to rebuild after the flood.

Mandal and dozens of his colleagues have been in Sindhupalchok working on reconstruction after the 2015 earthquake.

The sediment deposit from the Indrawati and Melamchi rivers is 25m deep in place, and shows how high the water was on the night of 15 June.

EVENTS



Digital Exhibition

Documentary photographer Nabin Baral, under a grant from the British Council, has worked with independent UK curator Anna Colin to present a digital exhibition on the prevalence of witch accusation and persecution in Nepal. Watch the exhibition at <http://nabinbaral.com/wap-nepal>.

Nepal Reads

Explore acclaimed works of poetry, autobiographical fiction and memoirs by authors Billy-Ray Belcourt, Kai Cheng Thom, Maia Kobabe, Ocean Vuong, Saeed Jones, and Samra Habib during Nepal Reads: Gender and Sexuality 2021. Go to Book Bus Nepal's Facebook page to sign up for the event.

June- September

Short Story competition

Anthology Magazine's short story award is open to original and previously unpublished short stories in the English language. The stories submitted must be on the theme of 'Memories' and must not exceed the maximum of 1,500 words.

Submission deadline: 15 July, Fee: €15



Mandala workshop

Thinking of tuning into that creative side with all the free time at home? Join the Online Mandala workshop organised by Happy Craft Touch and start with the basics of the artform. Get more details on Happy Craft Touch's Facebook Place.

26-27 June, 9802026279

DINING AT HOME



Sweet Fix

Keep hot, humid afternoons at bay with healthy handcrafted popsicles. Get the Coconut Splash, Watermelon Lime, and Blackberry Yogurt pops. Head to Facebook for details or order from the Sweet Fix website.

9828583465

ISOLATION READING

Unbound

Unbound, by Annie Zaidi, attempts to capture two millennia of women's writing in the vast literary world of India. And is a thoughtful tribute to the sisterhood that wrote steadfastly amidst all odds, and was rarely given space in major literary collections.

A Little Life

American novelist Hanya Yanagihara's A Little Life lingers over the histories of four friends—a lawyer, an architect, a painter, and an aspiring actor—in New York. The novel deals with difficult and sensitive subject matters, so several trigger warnings to readers.



While the Gods Were Sleeping

Elizabeth Enslin's While the Gods Were Sleeping is a personal memoir about the early days after her marriage to a Nepali man, the initial culture shock of being in Nepal, and the challenges of an aspiring anthropologist with the political backdrop of the last days of the Panchayat and a stirring democracy movement.

The Bullet and the Ballot Box

Aditya Adhikari's recently published book, The Bullet and the Ballot Box: The Story of a Maoist Revolution, chronicling the days and nights of Nepal's decade-long conflict, their dramatic ascendance to power and equally dramatic downfall

Losing Earth

Losing Earth: A Recent History is a 2019 book by essayist Nathaniel Rich that documents scientific evidence about, as well as the fallout from the decades-long denial of global warming.

Cafe Soma

Pick from Cafe Soma's breakfast sandwiches, burgers served with potato wedges and coleslaw, and desserts. Or get the Beetroot & Walnut salad as a healthier option. Browse the menu.

Jawalakhel (01) 5528732/Baluwatar (01) 4415792

Grill Durbar

At Grill Durbar, there isn't anything that can't be grilled. Try the signature grilled chicken and the Durbar fries. Check out Facebook for take away details.

Sankhamul, 9813578858/Jawalakhel, 9849777410

Pho99

Enjoy mouthwatering Vietnamese food including fresh Banh Mi Sandwiches, Vietnamese salads and curries, along with Vietnam's national staple, the delicious Pho. Check out the menu on Foodmandu.

9803203119, 9802043330

PODCASTS



Audio Bites

Audio Bites by Shutter Corp films offers discussions with Nepali public figures on social issues including mental health, motherhood, social media, the environment and more. Find Audio Bites on YouTube.

Night Vale

Welcome to Night Vale is a twice-monthly podcast from the fictional desert town of Night Vale, where every conspiracy theory is true. The Night Vale website has a recommended list of episodes to start listening from.

Longform

Longform features weekly behind-the-story interviews with non-fiction writers, including how journalists got started and brought major stories to the public. Go to longform.org/podcast to start.

Reply All

A podcast that features stories about how people shape the Internet, how the Internet shapes people, and how to survive the Internet age. Start listening on Apple podcasts.



Lore

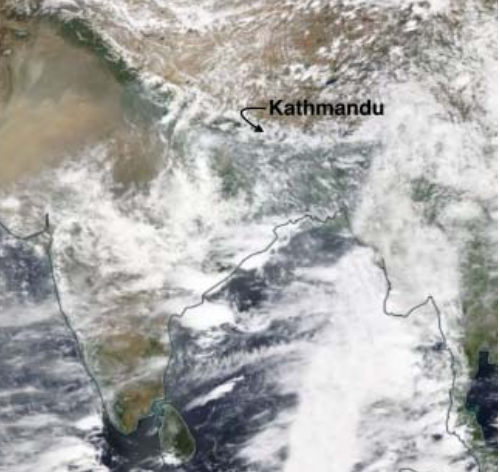
Each episode of Lore is an examination of dark historical tales that explores the mysterious creatures, tragic events, and unusual places that fill the pages of history. Find Lore on Stitcher.



Raithaane

Committed to using locally sourced food, every dish on Raithaane's menu is connected to different communities of the nation. Take a gastronomic tour of Nepal right from home. Look at the menu online.


11:30pm-7pm, Patan Darbar Square, 9801002971



The southwest monsoon is advancing ahead of schedule across Nepal, and after a brief pause, will be getting a second wind over the weekend. There is a large monsoonal trough over Odisha in India, and this will be carried northwest towards Nepal in the coming days. This will mean more rain, most of it falling mostly at night right into next week. People living along river valleys and in the Tarai need to be vigilant.

FRIDAY 25° 20° SATURDAY 25° 18° SUNDAY 25° 19°

AIR QUALITY INDEX



As expected, there has been a small uptick in air pollution since the lockdown rules were relaxed on Tuesday. Despite the rain, these levels are higher than what we had last week when no vehicles were allowed on the streets. There is also quite a lot of open burning of garbage and biomass going on in the Valley, which has kept the Air Quality Index above 60 despite the rain and lockdown. Keep your masks on when venturing out: both to keep out suspended particles and droplets containing the virus.

OUR PICK




Rafiki

Wanuri Kahiu's 2018 Kenyan romantic drama that premiered at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival, is a love story of two young women Kena and Ziki, daughters to political rivals vying for the same position in a local election in Nairobi. Their relationship is set against the background of the two women's relationships with their families, their fathers' political ambitions, and the discourse surrounding LGBT rights in Kenya. Stars Samantha Mugatsia, Sheila Munjiva, Jimmy Gathu, Dennis Musyoka, and more.

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

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Keeping up with content creators

Cool apps that go into the casual content creator's toolbox

It is 2021, and everybody is a content creator. If people are not leveraging social media to do their own personal branding, they are using it as free space to market their small business, their online startup, book club, social enterprise or homemade brownies.



TECH AWAY
Saniaa Shah

A picture is not just clicked and posted. Well, it is, but not before it is adjusted, colour corrected, filtered and given a poppy frame, possibly with text accompanying it. Fitness instructors are pushing out workout videos on Instagram, startup CEOs are writing blogs on LinkedIn, mothers making *achaar* are getting bookings via Facebook comments, and dermatologists are giving skin tips through TikTok videos.

They all know that content is king. Some may be getting paid for it, and some may not, but they're all motivated to stay online and keep talking.

People no longer need to pander to the gatekeepers of entertainment, thanks to the web. Social media is a seemingly an even playing field. ‘Seemingly’ because algorithms give more reach to content that receive more engagement, plus a lot of content creators have entire teams hired to handle their pages, while we fumble with our browser tabs. Besides, if we are all publishing content regularly, we are also dealing with increasing competition to get our content liked, shared or commented on.

Content with images get more views than written content, and studies show video content proves to be the most engaging and persuasive format of all communication. Not everyone has a filmmaker, video editor or professional photographer in the family to lean on. Hence, content creation apps have become a staple in every mobile phone – at least, of those who prefer to be self-dependent and tech-savvy.

Millennials today are posting stunning influencer-level photographs and Gen Z kids are sharing videos to express themselves. So, what are they using to create creative content? Here is a list of five apps that go into the casual content creator's toolbox.

CANVA

The all-rounder superstar of content creation, Canva has given many budding graphic designers a run for their money with its ability to create drag-and-drop designs of everything from a Facebook cover photo to a presentation cover to a marketing brochure in both digital and printable file formats.

It is the market leader mainly because it offers user-friendliness and customisation options like no other product. Whether you use it on mobile or desktop, with a little practice, you can design beautiful posters, social media posts and invitations like a professional would, in very little time.

Canva puts the ‘can’ in can-do, and it even offers colour palettes, complementary font combinations, free vector icons and readymade templates so that you never have to start with a blank page. The best



part: it isn't just about creating images.

Canva is perfectly suited for those looking to design business cards, educational workbooks, newsletters and flyers as well. All in all, if you don't have the time or bandwidth to master professional software like Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator, Canva is your saviour!

INSHOT

Let us say, you have a beautiful portrait photo, but you want it in square size (1:1 ratio) without cropping any of it, so that it looks better on your feed. Enter InShot, the app that shot to fame for its canvas size options to edit your photos to suit the platform you are placing them on.

Do not underestimate InShot's capabilities by its welcome screen, a minimalist three-button page that asks whether you want to create a Video, Image or Collage. This app is quite the



multitasker and easily one of the essential image and video editing apps that make content packaging a breeze.

When it comes to video, InShot helps stitch video clips into one longer video, letting you adjust speed of footage as well as add music (from an assortment of free tracks available on the app itself) along the way. It even has cool features like the freeze frame or reverse video option. For both images and videos, you can add filters, text boxes, stickers and frames to your content, and you can change the canvas size as well.

Choose from background colours, gradients and patterns to customise your plain white canvas to make it look cute. For those unfamiliar with common photo editing features like adjusting the levels of contrast, warmth, saturation and grain, preset filters can give pictures or video a more polished look and character to it without wasting any time.

ADOBE SPARK

For a creativity app that lets you design stylish layouts in vivid colours that will up your social media game in no time, it's surprising how little people even know about Adobe Spark. You don't have to be in branding or social media marketing to enjoy the benefits of this sophisticated app that is quite simple to use. Kickstart logo design by gathering and

if you are not a beginner, Adobe Spark will definitely give you more visual value for your efforts. Unique features like a separate editor that lets you create beautiful web pages and the ability to record audio (for voiceover) while editing your video, give Spark a clear edge over other apps in the digital content creation realm.

QUIK

For a slick video editing app that does not insist on adding its watermark (VivaVideo and BeeCut do) in exchange for being able to use it for free, Quik is the answer. Developed by GoPro primarily for Instagrammers who want to capture their sweet moment or action-packed memories, without spending hours applying every transition, cover, and soundtrack.

Quik also offers a convenient menu of ready templates that encapsulate almost every mood, with colours, fonts and elements to evoke a specific style. A clever problem solver, this app has its own



library of special photos or videos beforehand to edit into something nice later, instead of having to scroll through hundreds of files in your gallery to find that one candid gem. The app is so smart, it will even collect content from the photo gallery and create automated videos, like Google Photos does, and serve it up to you every week. User do not have to do anything and they have content at their fingertips.

There are dozens of other apps, but let us end this list with a few special mentions: Adobe Premiere Clip for simply arranging and cutting video clips without rich features, Adobe Lightroom for making average photography look stunning with a few smart filters and touch-ups, and Over for using beautiful typography (words in attractive font) and creating next level Stories. 

Saniaa Shah runs Studio Aakar, a film production studio. Her marketing career helped her develop a keen interest in tech and digital culture.




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The real cost of Nepal's



The pandemic makes Nepalis poorer and ruins the economy, but the government has no solutions

● Anita Bhetwal

After two months in which there were new records of cases and fatalities every day, the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic appears to be cresting in Nepal, but it has left the economy in ruins with a crisis-ridden government offering no hope to citizens.

At its peak in mid-May, there were more than 9,000 new infections and up to 250 deaths daily. And that was just the official count, models put the figures at least three times higher. However, the real impact of the pandemic is in the country's economic meltdown, with more than half the employed losing their jobs.

The Covid-induced lockdowns have pushed at least 9 million Nepalis back below the poverty line, which means they are now unable to access food and water,

basic health care and education. This has completely reversed Nepal's gains in poverty reduction in the past ten years.

Back in March, at the tail end of the first wave, Himalmedia's tv magazine *Saglo Samaj* interviewed farmers, tourist guides, hotel operators and taxi drivers most affected by the lockdowns.

This week, the team revisited each of the same people to find out what had become of them. Their stories are a microcosm of a society ravaged by the pandemic, where the poor have got poorer.

Nepalis suffered altogether five months of lockdown in 2020, and another nearly two months this year. The restrictions were eased this week, even though the daily number of fatalities and active cases are higher than when the lockdown was imposed on 29 April.

The pandemic and the lockdowns have disabled every sector. Some 1.1 million people in the hospitality industry have been directly impacted by the pandemic and more than half of Nepalis lost their jobs in the past month alone.

Yet, the government has no clear plans to provide alternative employment opportunities for those who lost their jobs. In fact, it has been too preoccupied with a political power struggle for most of the pandemic to plan a real exit strategy. Every response to the crisis has been too little, too late.

On Tuesday, even though other districts prepared to relax their lockdown just as Kathmandu did, Nepal saw 4,522 new cases and 41 fatalities. There are a total of 52,648 active infections, 762 of them in ICU and 218 in ventilator support in hospitals across the country.

Public health experts are already warning of a possible third wave and urging the government to make preparations for increased contact tracing and hospital treatment to avoid much devastation.



Milked dry

Buffalo milk is the only source of income for farmers in Kamdi village of Banke district in the western Tarai. But many of the dairy farmers were unable to sell their milk during the lockdowns in 2020. Later, they didn't get a fair price and the Dairy Development Corporation was slow to pay even what they were owed.

"The market is closed, there is barely any feed for the cattle. We are working day and night, but for nothing," says Malati Prasad Yadav, who has 150 buffalos, but little income since the pandemic.

The farmers took loans to buy feed and take care of the buffalos, but the second wave has quashed the little hope they had. They were hoping the government would announce a relief package in this year's budget. But their hopes were dashed.

"We are having to pour the milk into the drains, there are no consumers for ghee or cheese. We are running at a loss and there is no telling how long it will last," says Saroj Pandey of the SJ Dairy in Nepalganj. "The government should boost the morale of farmers and local businesses, subsidise their electricity or promote Nepali goods by stopping import from the third country."

Down and out

While some worry about paying millions in bank loans, daily wage labourers worry about the next meal. Kancha Lama has been operating a rickshaw in Kathmandu for 38 years, but his business is down and out. He hardly gets one ride a day, and mostly depends on people distributing free food.

"It's easy for the government to tell us to stay home and eat healthy, where is the money? It doesn't

even allow me to beg on the streets. At least they should distribute rations for people like us," says Lama. "If I get Covid, at least I will be out of this misery."

Bir Bahadur Lama is in Asan every day, and if it is his lucky day he will get a client or two to carry loads for them. Otherwise, he sits on the temple steps passing the day with other jobless porters. Before the pandemic, they used to carry loads for Asan's many shops. Sometimes, good samaritans offer them food, but that is rare.

"I just wish I did not have to sleep hungry and lockdown would end soon, that is all I wish for," he says.

Pandemic makes the poor poorer

There is empirical evidence that the second pandemic wave has further impoverished Nepal's poor. Even by modest estimates, some 9 million Nepalis have been pushed back below the poverty line due to Covid-19 induced lockdowns. In this week's *Saglo Samaj* tv magazine, Shankar Sharma, former ambassador to the US and vice-chairperson of the National Planning Commission spoke to Kanak Mani Dixit. Excerpts:

Kanak Mani Dixit: We went back to people we had interviewed four months ago, and found that their situation had further declined. Do they represent the current Nepali society?

Shankar Sharma: They are an accurate representation. There are three categories that have been hit the hardest by the pandemic: the first are subsistence farmers below the poverty line, this also includes disadvantaged groups. The next are people in the informal sector whose livelihood has been endangered with the extended closure of the market. Then there is the hospitality industry and unlike others, they haven't been able to



pick up after the first wave because the impact of the lockdown on the travel industry is long-term. These businesses had loans and now their debt has accumulated.

These impacts are directly reflected in our macroeconomic numbers. Economic growth rate last year was 2% and this year it won't be more than 1%. Similarly, the World Bank estimates that the pandemic has pushed 9 million people in Nepal back below the poverty line.

Would you say that because it is not monetised rural subsistence living is faring better?

Back during the Maoist insurgency,

some development partners had conducted a study about people who had migrated to the cities due to the violence. They asked people if they would go back to the village once the peace accord was signed, 93% of the respondents said no.

One of the main reasons behind this was Nepal's agriculture couldn't compete with Indian and Chinese produce. This also led to more people migrating abroad. Experts have suggested the concept of contract farming, which is also included in this year's budget and will do well for the country.

But one of our biggest problems is our inability to identify the poor. The government has developed ID

cards for their identification, but 23% of the poor are not on the list but 25% are those who have listed themselves in hopes of getting some relief. As a result, the real poor have been deprived even of their social security fund.

What should we do to boost their morale and of the country?

The affected people are those in rural Nepal but they also have an advantage of three levels of government. But it is still the responsibility of the central government to provide relief worth at least two months at \$1 per day for its people. Unfortunately, there is no mention of this in the budget this year.

The Nepal government has also allocated a total of Rs50 billion for training in the last two budgets but hasn't been able to spend that money. This fund should be used in skill development for Nepalis post lockdown, effective spending of the budget is a must. Similarly, the government should support cottage and small industries so that they don't close down. If we lack funding, we could use loans and grants we have received from international development partners.

Despite the pandemic, there is still talk about Nepal graduating from Least Developed Country (LDC)

status to a middle-income country.

What will happen now?

Following the pandemic, the United Nations has set a new deadline for the LDCs to graduate to lower-middle-income and middle-income countries. The good news is that we have made some progress in our per capita income, and the fact that our economy is now dependent on multiple factors is a positive sign. But what is worrying is that our economic growth is still lower than the average growth of underdeveloped countries. This means we will have to work more on increasing our living standard.

It is said that Nepal is not a poor country, but the government just cannot seem to spend its development budget. If they were held more to account by civil society and media during this pandemic that might help?

I think that is an appropriate conclusion to make. The government will always play the lead role, but it is important to highlight the importance of civil society and journalists in creating awareness about various programs at the local level such as the Prime Minister's Employment Scheme, which goes a long way in rejuvenating elected representatives in villages and towns.

second wave



Unserviceable

Big businesses have their own woes. The three-star Airport Hotel in Kathmandu has seen only a handful of guests in more than a year. The hotel's original staff of 100 is down to 10, and only 10 of its 62 rooms are kept serviceable.

"We are doing much worse than last year, we did survive 15 months somehow, there were some domestic tourists, but then the second wave happened and it destroyed what little we had," says owner Binayak Shah, adding that he has not been able to pay the monthly instalments on its loan for 17 months.

He adds: "I have no income, so how can I pay them? This means sooner or later, the bank is going to blacklist me, and put this hotel up for auction."



Tourism and realism

One of the hardest-hit sectors is tourism. And while professionals of most fields have had to cope with the challenges brought on by the pandemic, tourist guides have been unemployed for more than a year now. Four months ago, tourist guide Shankar Bhattarai had taken up teaching to make a living but was spending all his free time reading up about Nepal's history and culture to better prepare himself for when the tourists would come back post lockdown. But the second wave killed what was left of Nepal's tourism.

He has since given up any hope of normalcy and is constantly worried about debt collectors. Hoping for an alternative for tourists guides like himself, he was further depressed with this year's budget.

"There were provisions only for the big hotels and travel agents, we didn't find ordinary tour guides like us anywhere in the relief packages," says Bhattarai, who had been a tourist guide since 2011. "I've tried my best to promote Nepal through my work but at our time of need, we have no government support. I now question myself about staying back in Nepal."



Taken for ride

During the lockdown last year, a bank took possession of Ganesh Tamang's taxi which he had bought with Rs500,000 out of savings from years of toil in the Gulf. With no other source of income, he is now back to his village and raises livestock. "I often feel like I was born in a wrong country, to a wrong family, and at the wrong time, it wouldn't have come to this anywhere else," he says.

Sagar Bohora has a sickly mother at home, and a family of young children dependent on him. But his taxi has broken down because it has not run much for the past year-and-a-half. He needs at least Rs30,000 for repairs, but he has barely enough after paying off the auto loan.

"I only ask banks and financial institutions that they give us a few months until after the lockdown so that we can pay our dues, by then we will be able to get up, with or without government help," says Bohora.



THE COST OF SECOND WAVE

Back in March, at the tail end of the first wave, Himalmedia's tv magazine *Sagla Samaj* interviewed farmers, tourist guides, hotel operators and taxi drivers most affected by the lockdowns. This week, the team revisited the same people to find out what has become of them. *Sagla Samaj* is aired on DishHome Channel 130 every Monday evening at 8:30pm.

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Smartass lockdown

Everything about living in Nepal these days is smart, and getting smarter. When he got elected, Kathmandu's Mayor declared that he could make the capital a 'smart city'. It may not seem like it to a casual observer, but he is making progress:

Smart politics

The reason lockdowns are so easy to enforce in Kathmandu is because we have been trained well to be locked up. First we had 30 years of Panchayat, then the dawn of democracy ushered in the glorious era of political shutdowns, when there were so many bands that we needed a website to just keep track of them. The way it worked was that if a disgruntled political party wanted to show a grunted party who was boss, it incinerated a couple of taxis on the Ring Road early in the morning. After that, the public willingly stayed home in support of this ingenious non-violent form of civil disobedience. Unfortunately, after the new constitution, most political parties had been too lazy to organise lockdowns. But there is hope, the 5-party Alliance announced this week that Kathmandu will be a smart city again with daily street protests.

Smart trash

By closing down the Sisdoile Landfill site from time to time, our over-smart city encourages a circular economy and lets trash pile up on roadsides, allowing street fauna to forage on it. What remains decays organically, producing compost that recycles valuable nutrients back into the soil, and protects our urban biodiversity.

Smart Alec PM

Aside from a smart mayor, we also have a Smarty Pants PM. People call him Prime Minister Wily, or

the Old Fox, but he should call himself the Old Mule. From one mule to another, I must say this guy has outdone donkeyhood in general and asses in particular. Every time it looks like this is the end, he pulls another bunny out of his hat. How many hares does he have up his hair, anyway? The government is now down to a Gang of Five, so the only way for the opposition Gang of Four to keep up the pressure while the ball is in the Supreme Commander's Court is to declare a nationwide smart shutdown during this smart lockdown.

Street smart

One way to protect the city's smartness is to make sure the streets are permanently dug up. This is deliberate. There is no better way to make people street smart, keep them on their toes, alert, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, than to lay booby traps along public thoroughfares. This also prepares for next year's tourism by preserving the Valley's rustic charm. Tourists don't come to Kathmandu to see smooth asphalt roads and functioning traffic lights, they can do that in Singapore.

Smart sewer

Aside from roads, what gives this smart city its distinctive ambience and unique aroma is the Bagmuddy River. Nepal's capital may have been declared open-defecation free, but it still has a Sewage Canal running past our religious sites. When Nepalis exclaim "Holy shit!" they mean it literally.



The Ass

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