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NO WINNERS

There is little to expect from political partnerships that have repeatedly failed the people in the past

• Shekhar Kharel

Nepalis are wondering who won and who lost after the Supreme Court on 7 March effectively ruled that the Nepal Communist Party revert to its constituent elements: the UML and Maoist Centre. Even the leaders of the parties are confused.

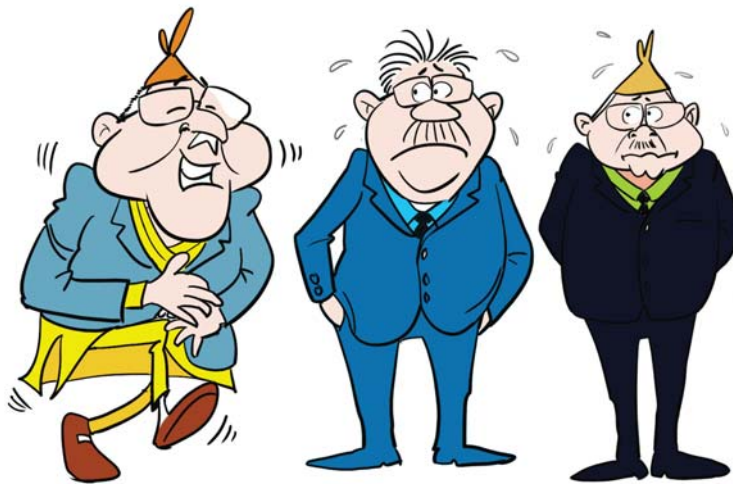
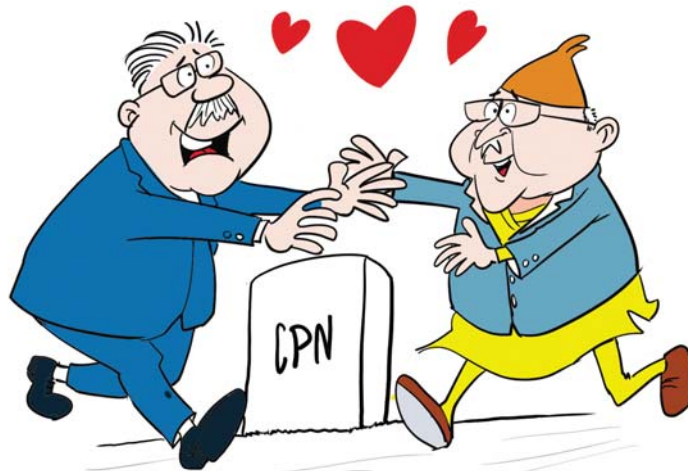
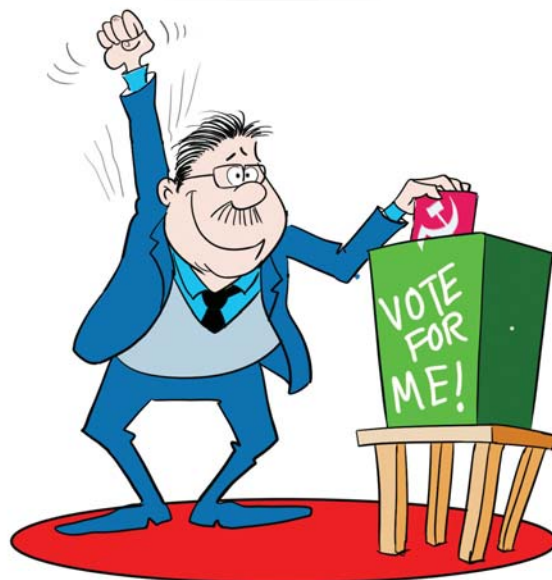
Within 24 hours of the court decision, a party that was cleft into two factions suddenly went back to its status three years ago. Leaders who were caught on the wrong side had to slink back to their mother party.

Despite judicial interventions to scrap the NCP on Sunday, and to reinstate the House on 23 February, Nepali politics looks as confused as ever. To be sure, Prime Minister Oli suffered a setback with the House restitution, but he got a respite with the party re-split.

His erstwhile UML comrades Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhlnath Khanal, who had defected to the Pushpa Kamal Dahal camp, have been forced to return to the fold.

The biggest relief must be felt by Chief Election Commissioner Dinesh Thapaliya, who had been undecided for over a month on whether the Oli or the Dahal faction would get the NCP party name and election symbol. He sprang into action after Sunday's court verdict and scrapped the NCP altogether.

Even Dahal himself must be feeling less stressed now. The bruising political battles with an aggressive Oli was taking its toll,



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

but he is now in sole control of his own independent party. It is like he has moved from a big house of an abusive landlord to his own small shed.

The biggest, and sorest, losers must be Oli's former UML comrades and former prime ministers Nepal, Khanal, and the firebrand MP from Achham, Bhim Rawal. The bad blood between them and Oli will surely affect the internal dynamics of the re-instituted UML.

The 7 March decision transformed Oli from a majority prime minister to a coalition leader. It is intriguing that even though the Maoist Centre has sent feelers to the Nepali Congress (NC) and the Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP) to form a coalition, it has not withdrawn its re-unification support for the UML.

Oli himself just needs to win the support of the JSP to remain prime minister, while Dahal will need both the NC and JSP. Dahal is hedging his bets: he does not want to lose a no-confidence vote since he cannot push another one for a year, and Oli may once more suddenly announce early elections.

The wily Oli is already looking at the option of splitting the JSP vote to garner the number needed to stay on as prime minister. With 121 MPs in the House, Oli just needs 17 more votes to cobble a coalition, which

he can get even if the rest of the JSP's anti-Oli leaders are

It's broke, fix it
EDITORIAL
PAGE 2

against joining. He can do that by agreeing to the JSP demand to free Resham Chaudhari, who is in detention for the Tikapur massacre of policemen in 2015.

The key player in the formation of the next government will be the JSP and not the NC or the Maoist Centre. In fact, the JSP can even form a government with the NC and the Maoists. Within the UML, the Nepal-Khanal camp do not have the numbers any more to challenge Oli till the next party convention.

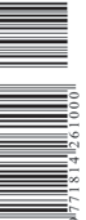
Despite the involvement of the three organs of the state – the judiciary, the executive and the legislative – Nepal's politics is more tangled than ever. When even a two-thirds majority government could not deliver on stability in the past three years, it would be foolish to expect a fragile coalition to do so now.

Which is why Oli may have been right: the best option may be fresh polls. If it is overseen by an all-party election government, it could deliver a fresh mandate and restore a derailed polity. 🇳🇵

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It's broke, fix it

There has been a lot of speculative analysis this week about the winners and losers in Nepal's latest political upheaval, after the decision on 7 March by the Supreme Court that annulled the unification of the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

Ruling on a petition that the party name was already registered, the Bench went beyond what was demanded to reinstate the NCP's two constituent parties: the UML led by K P Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal's Maoist Centre.

Ever since 2018, the country has been forced to pay the price for the inability of these two leaders to overcome their over-sized egos. Nepal's policy-making and development ground to a halt as the party and government got mired in intrigue and back-stabbing between the triumvirate of Oli, Dahal and Madhav Kumar Nepal.

Then, the Covid-19 crisis struck and Singha Darbar was too distracted to launch an effective response in time. The leaders were busy at their residences in Baluwatar, Khumaltar and Balkot in back-room wheeling and dealing.



Increasingly isolated, and fighting a rear-guard action, Prime Minister Oli dissolved the Lower House on 20 December just before the Dahal faction could register a no-confidence vote. When the Supreme Court restored the House on 23 February, there was great jubilation, with Dahal and Nepal feeding each other laddoo in front of cheering cadre.

That celebration turned out to be premature because it looks like Oli had another trick up his sleeves. Sunday's decision effectively dismantled the NCP and bifurcated it once more between the UML and the Maoists.

If it is indeed true that Oli had masterminded this all along, then he is even more of a schemer than we had given him credit for. That is not necessarily good for the rule of law since it means unacceptable executive interference in the judiciary.

The general conclusion is that Oli had nothing left to lose, and was willing to dissolve Parliament and split the party to prevent his two nemeses from gaining control of the NCP chair and prime ministership — even if it

meant sacrificing his leadership of government.

As someone said this week, Oli is playing chess and Dahal is playing checkers. The coming weeks will show how the party numbers in Parliament will play out in the formation of the next government. Both the UML and the Maoists are now courting the Nepali Congress (NC) and the Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP) to obtain the total 135 in the current 270-member Lower House.

The UML with 121 MPs will just need the NC's 63 seats to cobble together a coalition, whereas the Maoists with 53 members will require both the NC and the JSP's 34 to do so. All week, the two parties have been wooing the NC's Sher Bahadur Deuba and JSP leaders, with Dahal more interested for now in unseating Oli in a no-confidence vote than in forming a government.

All this takes us back to the bad old days of cyclical coalitions of the late 1990s and the early 2010s when the functions of government were paralysed by short-term politicking — exactly the kind of instability the 2015

Constitution was supposed to put a stop to.

Hopes that the unification of the NCP in 2018 would bring stability and put Nepal on the track to growth have also been dashed. The country has now gone back three years. To be sure, the UML and the Maoists had never really united and it remained

ideologically polarised between जबज and जन युद्ध (People's Multiparty Democracy vs People's War).

True to the dictum that a Communist party regards the faction immediately to the right of it as a greater enemy than an extreme rightwing party, both factions distrusted each other more than the NC. As he got more cornered, Oli was openly flirting with the Hindu right.

The question now is which ex-prime minister will be the new prime minister. Not that it matters much, these are all tried, tested and failed leaders who have had multiple chances in the past decades to prove their statesmanship.

The best-case scenario would be if the current political crisis could be turned into an opportunity by the four main parties to skip a generation and elevated a new crop of untainted younger leaders with fresh blood and energy.

But that may be wishful thinking. We may be once more seriously underestimating the egos and ambition of these superannuated septuagenarians.

The best outcome now would be if the four main parties skipped a generation to elevate a new crop of untainted younger leaders

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

An op-ed titled 'What the Left Can Right' by Pitambar Sharma 20 years ago this week in *Nepali Times* at the height of Maoist insurgency is instructive even today as the NCP splits in two.

Sharma called out the organised left with its root in civil society to go beyond rhetoric, and outline an alternative political and economic agenda and actions to achieve equity and social justice — issues raised by the rebels.

This week, two decades later, with the Nepal Communist Party officially split to pre-unification status (UML and CPN Maoists) following the Supreme Court decision, two things are clear. First, there is too much alpha maledom in Nepali politics for a unification to ever work. Second, leaders blinded by power struggles have long abandoned the very issues of equity and social justice they once fought, and killed, for.

Excerpts of Pitambar Sharma's report, *Nepali Times* #33 9-15 March 2001:

Unfortunately, it is the response of the moderate left to the Maoist People's War that has been the most enigmatic. It has consistently called for 'structural changes in the political and economic system', and, at least in theory, the left has remained vocal in the struggle for a society free of exploitation, and in championing the cause of the underclass, the poor, the deprived and the dispossessed. But all these points are central also



to the Maoist agenda, and one would have expected a fitting response to Maoist extremism from the political left. Instead, the left political parties have proved to be dumb, confused spectators caught between friend and foe.

If any political formation in Nepal has the capability to pull the carpet from under the feet of the Maoists, it is the organised left with its roots in civil society. That capability has to derive from a clear understanding of the possibilities of structural change within a democratic system. Such a political, economic and social agenda and programme would provide the basis for political action both within and outside parliament. This would, of course, demand a return to a politics based on ideology, a commodity rare in Nepali left politics today.

The Maoist People's War has fundamentally questioned the credibility of Nepal's mainstream left. It is doubtful whether a dialogue devoid of an economic and political agenda would really contribute much to the resolution of the Maoist insurrection, and it would be up to the left political parties to make a singular contribution by negotiating such an agenda, and bringing the nation back from the brink of a civil war in which there would be no winners.

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

ONLINE PACKAGES



RETURN OF THE GOD

Nepali Times Studio interviews US ambassador to Nepal Randy Berry on the return by the Dallas Museum of Art of the 800-year-old Laxmi-Narayan stone idol from Patan stolen in 1984. It sets a precedent for the homecoming of other Nepali artifacts from abroad, Berry says.



COVID'S COLLATERAL DAMAGE

One year after Nepal went into a Covid-19 nationwide lockdown, there has been enormous economic fallout. *Saglo Samaj* interviewed farmers, tourist guides, hotel operators and taxi drivers most affected by the crisis. Story: page 15.



LIFE TIME WITH ANJANA

In this instalment of her column, Anjana Rajbhandary talks about the need for parents to prepare boys to be kind and gentle to women and not excuse their behaviour under the pretext of masculinity. Column: page 12.

FORMER CHILDWORKER TURNED ATHLETE

Amazing job *Nepali Times* for highlighting the story of the rescued child worker to spread inspiration and positive news to society ('The steadfastness of a long-distance runner', Drishna Sthapit, Issue #1051)

Sushil Singh Thakuri

50 OUTSTANDING WOMEN

From the pictures itself, the list looks comprehensive and not just Kathmandu centric. Would love to read the book if anyone knows where to find it. ('50 outstanding women of Nepal', Pratibha Tuladhar, Issue #1051).

Pratik Shrestha

• Surprised Anuradha Koirala is not on the list.

Kiki Larouge

RANA COOKBOOK

Looking forward to learning Rana cuisines. Looks like the cook book is professionally done ('A taste of Nepal's Rana Past', *Nepali Times*, Issue #1051).

Sujata Thapa

• Looks like a great book, I am in the UK and thought I will buy it on Amazon.

Gary Barnett

• It looks more inclined to the south. Probably due to inter-country marriage. Again, it is part of Nepali culinary heritage.

RK Pradhan

• Would love to buy a copy. Jungali chara recipe can be used to prepare kalij which is legal now to sell from farms.

Suraj Hazare Dahal

WOMEN WRITERS

10 is a difficult number when there is a treasure trove of powerful books written by women about women ('About women by women' Richa Bhattarai, Issue #1051). Having said that, I wish Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's work had also been included.

Ninjoarmy Anahjmas

• I read one of the books and know many many more! Definitely going to have a look at a few of the ones mentioned.

Vanessa Schroter

VAGINA CONVERSATIONS

Such a nuanced write up by Pratibha Tuladhar. Thank you for this thoughtful reflection. #WD2021

Aba

• I've had a lot of reflexive moments about The Vagina Monologues and our productions in Kathmandu. Who is TVM for and what audience does it cater to? There is a need to create more inclusive spaces that are not classist, elitist and spaces that do not uphold gender binary. The feminist movement must be inclusive. We should be inclusive. It's time to rise!

Bivishika Bhandari

Times.com WHAT'S TRENDING



The steadfastness of a long-distance runner

by Dristi Sthapit

As an 11-year-old, she toiled all day in a restaurant, until she was rescued by activists from Shakti Samuha. For the past two years, she has been training to become an athlete. Read about her journey, and watch video.



Most reached and shared on Facebook

Holding up the whole sky in Jumla

by Monika Deupala

Unlike the bickering male leaders in Kathmandu, two women leaders in Jumla from rival parties have worked hand-in-hand to deliver services and run an efficient administration. This story was part of the International Women's Day package on *Nepali Times*.



Most popular on Twitter

About women by women

by Richa Bhattarai

We never feel the need to categorise men's writing, but how quickly books by women are tied to the limitations of 'romance', 'feminist', or 'women-centric.' Visit our social media to share your favourite books by women writers.



Most commented



A taste of Nepal's Rana Past

by *Nepali Times*

When a cookbook makes a reader drool, and just turning the pages gets the digestive juices going in anticipation, it means the content is a culinary masterpiece. Go online to read our review of Rohini Rana's mouth-wateringly illustrated book.



Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

On the occasion of #Women'sDay *Nepali Times* caught up with Supreme Court Justice Sapana Pradhan Malla to discuss progress of #Nepal's feminist movement, and the legal challenges that lie ahead.



Prashant Raj Pandey @aka78pop

The biggest challenge is the appointment of party stooges in the judiciary, constitutional bodies and wherever possible!



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

No one else but the woman should decide when it is the right time for her to have children.



United Nations Population Fund in Nepal @UNFPANepal

In Nepal, women are pressured to have male children to continue family lineage, writes @AnjyRajy via @NepaliTimes. Together, we must put an end to son preference & low value the placed on girls.



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

The status of women in Nepal's politics is still confined to tokenism. Shristi Karki reports.



RMS @yesramyes

People should be careful what they ask for. If you ask for tokenism, you will get tokenism. Proper solution would have been to encourage women to compete. Instead, some people went for an easy way-out by resorting to tokenism. It only aggravates the already pressing problem.



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Jumla is one of only two municipalities where both the mayor and deputy mayor are women. And what a difference that has made! @DeupalaMonika reports.



Shirley Blair @himlayanchildrn

'bickering' male leaders in Ktm. spot on.



Shradha @shradhagb

Women uplifting women. Women working harder. Women making stronger leaders. Women leadership truly making a difference in Jumla.



Madhav Chaulagain @madhavjee

Remarkable series of two powerful ladies from Jumla. Mayor Kantika Sejuwal and Deputy Mayor Apsara Mahat. Women Power.

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TURKISH AIRLINES

Nepal must save Nijgad Forest to receive climate funds

Clear-cutting the last native forest in the eastern Tarai violates climate commitments by Nepal and its partners



SAHARA SHRESTHA @SAHAROMBULAN

● Kashish Das Shrestha

As the 4th most vulnerable country in the world to the impact of the climate crisis, Nepal has emerged as a bellwether at international climate and conservation events.

Outside of the poles, the Himalaya is the largest storehouse of fresh water, and the mountains are one of the most biologically-diverse regions on Earth.

Nepal is a compelling story for international development partners who have invested vast resources into its conservation effort for decades, and not without some success.

But how accountable are these partners if their resources are awarded to the very actors perpetuating the ecological disasters that their funds are meant to prevent?

Nepal entered 2021 with a winter drought that resulted in barren mountains and raging wildfires. In February it saw high

profile donor-funded events, including a visit by the British MP and President of COP26, Alok Sharma, who announced a combined \$7.4 billion Green Recovery Support package for Nepal.

However, none of the donors seemed concerned that the government plans to clear-cut Nijgad Forest, the last remaining tract of native hardwood jungle in Nepal's eastern plains.

The forest is a corridor for nature areas in India and Nepal and is home to tigers, rhinos, elephants and pangolins. To understand the importance of Nijgad Forest, one simply has to read the detailed documents Nepal has submitted to agencies like UKAid, USAID and World Bank to qualify for funding that goes into protecting forests and endangered species.

The government and the international community already agree that destroying Nijgad Forest would be devastating for Nepal.

Yet, as Nepal's political leadership openly pushes plans to

clear-cut Nijgad, the international community is set to award it with additional billions of dollars and a massive green-washing opportunity.

It is to address this devastating contradiction that today I am launching the campaign SaveNijgad.org, and demand that Nepal's development partners condition conservation aid on the government's commitment to protecting Nijgad Forest by the time COP26 Climate Summit takes place in Glasgow in November.

The Nepal government's plan to build an international airport by logging Nijgad's trees amounts to perhaps the largest organised ecological crime in the country in recent times. It is enormous in scale, audacity and the amount of money that will change hands.

For most of 2020, Nepal's Cabinet cited an agreement with Zurich Airport International as the justification to start chopping down trees worth millions of dollars even though no such agreement existed. (See www.nepalitimes.com 18 September, 2020).

In May, the former Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism Yogesh Bhattarai invoked that imaginary agreement to defy a standing Supreme Court order that barred cutting of any trees for the project. He ordered the felling of 4,000 trees, and in September announced plans to cut down tens of thousands more by end-2020.

At the same time, Prime Minister Oli was boasting about his government's commitment to forest conservation to world leaders at the UN General Assembly. Nepal will make similar declarations at COP26.

The \$3.5 billion airport has never had a financier, developer or an airline that plans to use it. What the erstwhile Nepal Communist Party was steadfast on, instead, was to expedite the logging of more than two million trees estimated to be worth over \$500 million, and ignoring all local protests, experts, court orders, and the government's own regulations in doing so.

The issue of accountability also touches the country offices and headquarters of Nepal's development

partners, as well as taxpayers back home whose funds are going to projects led by bad actors dishonest in their intentions.

Why is Nepal being given unconditional financial assistance to conserve the Tarai Arc Landscape (TAL) and Chure regions while the country's political leadership is actively working to destroy both the TAL and Chure?

How did the World Bank sign an agreement to make \$45 million available to Nepal till 2025 for Emission Reduction based on TAL, when the government is planning to clear over 8,000 hectares of forest in the Tarai? Additionally, all of TAL is open indefinitely for petroleum exploration, and China is already drilling there.

International funding needs to be accountable, otherwise it is not only futile but also reckless. Even without a global climate crisis, deforesting Nijgad would unleash ecological havoc in the region.

Deforestation of this fragile landscape will make floods deadlier, affect water resources, increase human-wildlife conflict, harm the TAL and Chure conservation areas, disrupt trans-boundary ecosystem services, cause inter-generational climate injustice, disregard social equity, and remove a major carbon sink.

In short, it would result in the exact opposite of Nepal's commitments in writing and in proclamations at past international climate and conservation conferences for which it is receiving billions of dollars.

Nepal's political leaders know from experience they can ignore local opposition without consequences for ecological crimes. Receiving a \$7.4 billion 'green fund' from the international community without having to prove accountability would embolden these leaders, and give them the confidence that they can also get away with it internationally.

The US and UK embassies in Kathmandu, the World Bank and World Wildlife Fund must demonstrate and demand accountability, and work to save Nijgad before COP26 as proof of their shared commitment.

Join SaveNijgad.org in making this demand. 🇳🇵



Kashish Das Shrestha is heading the Save Nijgad by COP26 campaign at @SaveNijgad. He is a 2019 National Geographic Explorer and a former adviser to Parliament's Natural Resources and Means Committee and Water and Energy Committee.

PRABHU BANK



Turkish Launchpad 2021

Turkish Airlines is supporting the three-day Launchpad2021 career and job fair by People First. People First founder Ichhya Malla, Samiksha Rai of NYEF, Turkish Airlines General Manager for Nepal

Abdullah Tuncer Kecici, and Tashi Gyalzen Sherpa of iClean Technology were present at the launch. On 13 March there will be a Job Expo at the Radisson Hotel for networking.



NIU MQi+

NIU Nepal has announced the launch of its next generation of e-scooters NIU MQi+, and an all-electric smart scooter that features one removable 48V31Ah lithium-ion battery and a 1500W electromotor with 45km/h max speed and over 60-75km range.



Ncell-Dhulikhel Hospital

Ncell Axiata and Dhulikhel Hospital have started a Telemedicine and Health Informatics Program. At a formal inauguration, CEO Andy Chong of Ncell handed over the telemedicine kits to officials of four outreach centres under Dhulikhel Hospital.

Bajaj in Achham

Hansraj Hulaschand, the distributors of Bajaj motorcycles in the Nepal has inaugurated a fully facilitated new showroom



Shuvekshya Auto Trade and Suppliers in Achham with a vision to provide fully facilitated Bajaj's sales, services and spare parts throughout the country.

Zonta honors

On the occasion of International Women's Day, Zonta Club of Kathmandu honoured 'Inspirational and Courageous Women' for their achievements. The award ceremony was supported by Nabil Bank, Byanjan, Star Hospital Limited, Toni and Guy, Golchha Group. Twelve exemplary women from different professional backgrounds were recognised.



ALL PHOTOS: SHRISTI KARKI



A metaphor for metamorphosis

A British teacher whose love for butterflies made him stay in Nepal, and become a citizen



Colin Smith first came to Nepal in 1964 as a teacher, and has been here ever since.

In Pokhara, Colin Smith is known as पुताली बाजे, and proudly shows his Nepali citizenship certificate that he got after 30 years of trying (above).

Colin Smith's butterfly collection is exhibited at the International Mountain Museum in Pokhara (far left).

The small house in Lamagaun near Pokhara in which Colin Smith has been living with his Nepali family for the past 25 years (left).

● Shristi Karki in Pokhara

Admiring his Uncle Bob's butterfly collection as a young boy in England in 1950, Colin Smith had no idea that the fluttering insects would eventually become his life. Not in the UK, but in faraway Nepal.

As a Boy Scout, Smith's fascination for butterflies grew as his entomologist uncle taught him about the metamorphosis in the life cycle of these fascinating insects.

Before long, Smith was collecting butterflies himself, while also preparing to enroll at the Imperial College in South Kensington. In 1964, Smith came to Nepal as a teacher for United Mission Nepal (UMN).

"I was told that alongside teaching, I needed to have a hobby, too. I told them that I collected butterflies," he says. He was asked to make a collection from Nepal to bring back home.

It is a sunny January morning and Smith, now 85, sits in a thin half-sleeved shirt in his garden in Pokhara. He has lived in Nepal for 55 years now, the last 25 of them with Min Bahadur Pariyar's family

in Lamagaun near Pokhara.

Smith taught Math and English around schools in Pokhara and Kathmandu, which is when he met Dorothy Merow, who taught at Pokhara's Prithivi Narayan Campus and had started a small natural history museum there. She persuaded him to collect butterflies for the museum.

He also started collecting and photographing rare butterflies from all over Nepal for Tribhuvan University, the Annapurna Conservation Area Project, and the International Mountain Museum in Pokhara.

But then a new reality set in.

"It was one thing to collect butterflies as a hobby, but it was another thing entirely to do it every day," says Smith, who was travelling all the time from Dharan and Ilam in the east, to Gorkha and Sukhlaphanta in the west.

"No one knows why, but Godavari is the best place to find butterflies in Nepal, and why more than half the species in Nepal are found here," says Smith, recalling

his days with friend and fellow butterfly expert Mahendra Limbu exploring the biodiversity-rich mountain south of Kathmandu.

Nepal is one of the best places in the world for butterfly watchers.

Of the 17,500 or so species of butterflies in the world, 660 are found in Nepal, and 20 of them are on the endangered list. Smith and Limbu both believe there is great potential if Nepal marketed expeditions in the peak butterfly watching seasons in March–June and August–October. Smith says it is important not just to show visitors Nepal's fabulous diversity of butterflies, but also provide detailed information about each species.

During this time, Smith began writing articles on butterflies for academic journals, which led to his first attempt at making a comprehensive checklist of butterflies in Nepal. He would go on to write four more books about butterflies and moths which are now used as school textbooks.

In the early 2000s, Smith began working mostly on moths, collecting

for Kathmandu University. "I used to travel around with a fluorescent bulb in a white sheet to collect dead specimens in the evenings," says Smith, who has come to be known as पुताली बाजे, as he ages into his hobby. "Butterfly Grandad" is also what Uncle Bob's own grandchildren call him back in England, so it was a fitting Nepali nickname for Colin.

Min Bahadur and his friend Surendra Pariyar met Smith as young boys during a camping trip to Rupa Lake. They showed an interest in collecting butterflies and in the process, formed a deep bond.

"He taught me everything there is to know about butterflies," Surendra says. He and Min Bahadur sit beside Smith as the sun illuminates the south face of Machapuchre. The butterfly collection is now at the International Mountain Museum, and Smith's photographs are postcards.

The printed postcards do not sell anymore because of the collapse of tourism and the demise of the postal service, so Smith hands them out to children in his butterfly walks.

In 2019, Smith was granted

honorary citizenship of Nepal.

"There wasn't anything for me to do in England, while there was something for me to do here," he says.

Although he had always wanted to be a Nepali citizen, being one took him a long time. He had applied as far back as 1995, but it was only years later, after Surendra Pariyar pulled in all possible efforts that the Nepal government finally responded to the request.

"The man wants to live out his life here, be cremated and have his ashes scattered in the Seti, so he deserves to be a Nepali," says Surendra.

The last time Smith left Nepal was to go to England in 2006. His brother lives in New Zealand and he hopes he could go there once to visit, but admits that at his age, travelling is difficult.

Smith finishes up his toast and an omelette, which Min Bahadur's daughter brings him. He places leftover scraps of eggs down on the floor and says, "This is for the बिरालो."

Then Putali Baje stands up, the white bag clutched in his hands, and slowly makes his way back inside his little green house. 🇳🇵



“The Laxmi-Narayan will finally be back where it belongs – in the hands of Nepalis.”

The 800-year-old statue of Laxmi-Narayan stolen from a shrine in Patan's Patko Tole in 1984 was recently traced to the Dallas Museum of Art. On 5 March, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) handed over the 70kg stone figure to the Nepal Embassy in Washington. It will soon be returned to Nepal.

Nepali Times spoke to US Ambassador Randy Berry about the US government's role in repatriating this and other religious objects in future. Go online to watch interview on *Nepali Times Studio*.

Nepali Times: What is the role of US Embassy in repatriating stolen religious objects?

Randy Berry: In this case, our Regional Security Office – staffed with special agents from the Bureau of Diplomatic Security – played a critical liaison role between the Nepal Police and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, which was conducting the investigation in Texas. Being able to bridge the communication gap between Nepal and American law enforcement agencies and ensuring harmony in the efforts of all involved in the recovery of the Laxmi-Narayan statue are key strengths of our Regional Security Officers.

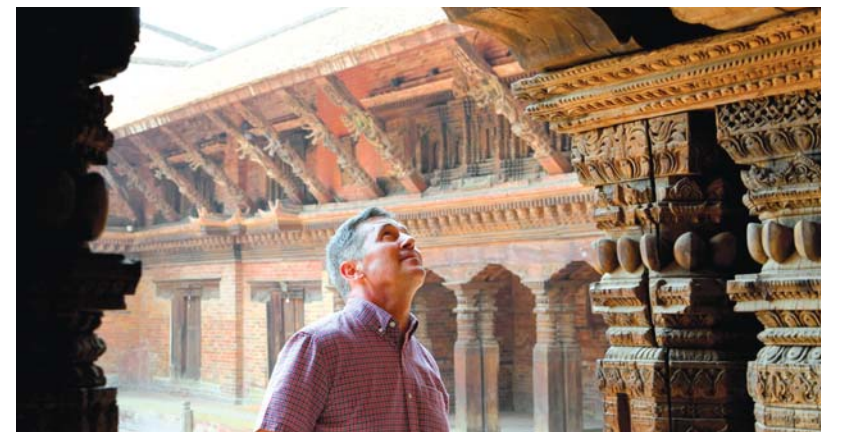
Overall, helping to protect cultural heritage is an important and unique aspect of our foreign policy. For more than 50 years, the US Department of State has had a Bureau dedicated to education and cultural affairs. Its mission is to foster mutual understanding between Americans and the people of other countries through people-to-people exchanges, such as the Fulbright and IVLP programs, and through sports, arts, and cultural programs.

with the Nepal government in the future?

Whenever possible, we intend to collaborate with the concerned stakeholders to identify the artifacts and facilitate their return. They are not only in the United States, but in many places around the world. I hope other governments and museums follow suit. It takes a long time to make sure that all the information and documentation is such that when the time comes for actual handover there aren't disputes over ownership of the piece any longer. We have learned a thing or two in this process, and I think we will be more efficient the next time.

What are America's policies on restoration of antiquities of Greece, Italy, Egypt, and Cambodia?

I can't speak to a broad policy for those pieces from those countries. However, the Department of State has incredible programs that demonstrate the United States' commitment to art and cultural preservation as I discussed earlier. To my knowledge, we are one of the few foreign affairs ministries that has an entire



bureau that is in part dedicated to the art and culture of our diplomatic partners. That is because we consider cultural heritage vitally important – not only as a matter of foreign policy, but because we recognise the commonality in wanting to preserve cultural and historical pieces, art, and property for future generations.

Since 2003, there have been 25 AFCP projects just in Nepal, including Kathmandu's Gaddi Baithak, investing more than \$3.8 million. That's incredible. Our grantees also ensure artisan training to transfer knowledge and job skills to younger generations. So it is not just a program that ends when the work on a particular project is complete.

How important a precedent is the homecoming of Laxmi-Narayan statue?

It has huge importance. First, this is an idol that dates back to between the 12th and 15th centuries, and it speaks to Nepal's rich cultural heritage. The homecoming also reflects the unique friendship between Nepal and the United States. I'm thrilled the Laxmi-Narayan will finally be back where it belongs – in the hands of Nepalis.

When they are sitting on the shelf behind glass in the museum in the West, they can be appreciated for all of the reasons that they should: high artistry, amazing provenance, compelling stories. But there, these are just objects of fine art. When they are at home in Nepal they are different, these are objects that resided in the centre of the communities for generation. The loss of these pieces cost the communities much more than simply a piece of art or statuary. It robbed them of the centre of their faith, it robbed them of the core of the community.

There are thousands of Nepali artifacts in the United States, will the Embassy help in identifying them and cooperate

with the Nepal government in the future?

When they are sitting on the shelf behind glass in the museum in the West, they can be appreciated for all of the reasons that they should: high artistry, amazing provenance, compelling stories. But there, these are just objects of fine art. When they are at home in Nepal they are different, these are objects that resided in the centre of the communities for generation. The loss of these pieces cost the communities much more than simply a piece of art or statuary. It robbed them of the centre of their faith, it robbed them of the core of the community.

You personally have a degree in art, how did you shift to diplomacy?

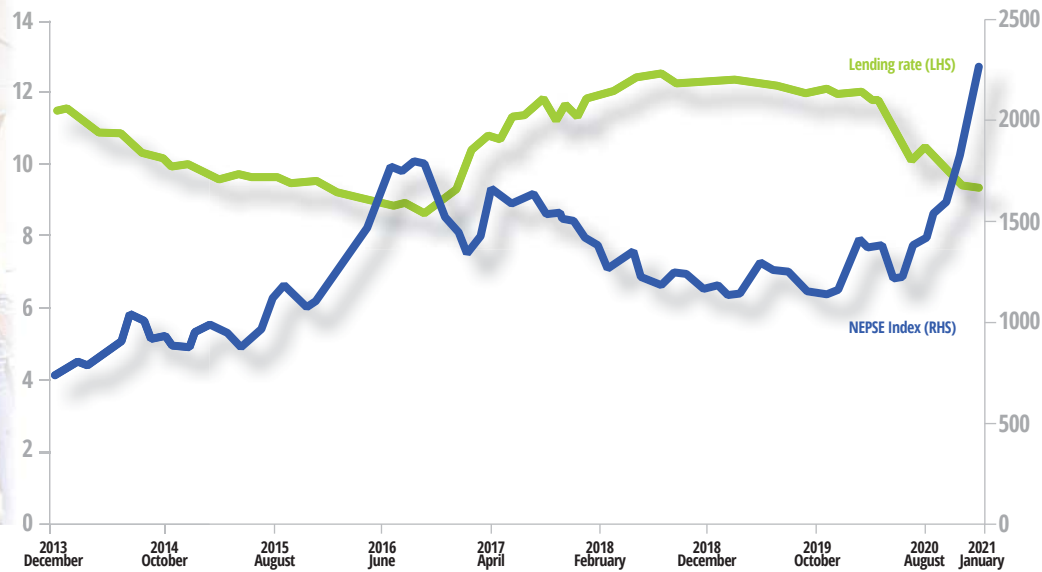
I've had an enduring interest in art as a means of communication, art history, and art preservation throughout my life, and my Masters' level studies focused on Art History. I also had the opportunity as a young man to live and work in North Africa, and study the ancient architecture, statuary, and hieroglyphs from Cairo (in Egypt) to Meroe (in Sudan) and all points in-between.

The excavations of Pharaonic treasures up and down in the Nile Valley left a huge impression in me because it goes to the core of the identity of the place and it's hard for me to imagine a place like Egypt without its ancient statuary.

Art has been a vital form of human communication since prehistoric times. It is a reflection of who we were, what we believed, and how we lived. When we preserve historic art, we embrace and conserve history, and honour those ancient storytellers who used form and texture, rather than words, to express cultural value.

Despite politics, Nepal's stock market is bullish

NEPSE is going through a tectonic shift with record transactions, but crucial reforms are needed



of the largest US companies) in the same period. During these 20 years, there have also been periods where the NEPSE fell as much as 75% (between August 2008 and June 2011) and soared over 500% (between June 2011 to July 2016).

Stock markets are cyclical by nature. Corrections, and subsequent rises, are bound to happen. In this apparently chaotic environment of ups and downs, one thing is here to stay: a fundamental shift and dynamism of trading online. This will have short-term disruptions, but it is likely to stabilise the Nepali capital market for years to come. 🇳🇵

Santosh Pokharel, CFA works in development sector. **Sudyumna Dahal** is Doctoral candidate at CAMA, Australian National University.

● Santosh Pokharel and Sudyumna Dahal

Aside from second-guessing what will happen in the restored Parliament on Sunday, the major past-time of urban Nepalis these days is to speculate about the country's volatile stock market.

During the past six months, the Nepali Stock Market (NEPSE) has soared, which immediately begs the question: is a fall imminent?

The NEPSE Index is at a record high market capitalisation, which is the total value of shares listed in the stock market. Daily turnovers have started crossing the Rs10 billion mark, investors seem to be raking it in.

All this has happened at a time when the economy is being battered by the impact of the pandemic, which has led to heated debates over whether the market is in a bubble and likely to crash, bringing ordinate investors down with it.

Current highs are the combination of several factors:

- Low interest rate
- High liquidity in the banking system
- Dematerialisation (conversion of physical certificates to electronic units) of shares
- Restriction of 'kitta-kaat' in real estate
- Fear of missing out (FOMO)

Low share prices between 2017-2019 have been attributed to the appointment of Yubraj Khatriwada as finance minister. He famously (or infamously for investors) once remarked that investing in stocks was "not productive".

One factor that has gone relatively unnoticed but has been a game-changer is the advent of 'online trading'. The possibility to make transactions through the online banking system has ushered in a new breed of investors. Online trading has made the Nepali stock market easily accessible to the public, who can now trade from their living room instead of going to a broker office or bank to make a payment.

This trend was starting to be reflected in the data before COVID-19 gripped the country. From October 2019 to February 2020, the number of monthly share transactions doubled from an average of 200,000 to 400,000, which pushed the NEPSE Index to the 1,600s, despite relatively higher interest rate hovering above 11%.

Following COVID-19 restrictions, the number of transactions further increased and reached a whopping 1.1 million per month in recent months. This

reflects the unprecedented entry of retail investors who, with a click of a mouse, can invest money that otherwise would be sitting idle, earning savings account interest rates.

This increased participation and diversification of the investor base is also reflected by the data on stock market penetration. DEMAT accounts have increased from 800,000 in mid-July 2017 to 1.4 million in mid-July 2019, and is currently estimated at 2.5 million -- about 8% of Nepal's total population.

More than 1.5 million Nepalis applied for the recent IPO of an infrastructure finance company. Compare this number with India, where around 2% of the country's population invest in the stock market, while in China this number is estimated to be around 7%.

But, online trading also brings a host of new challenges. Asymmetric information, poor advisory services and buying shares based on rumours are big concerns. Investors can lose money in the share market if they overpaid for stock or if their investment horizon is not long enough.

However, by not investing they can also 'lose' potential gains. So, investors need to understand and be aware of cognitive biases that limit investing success. It is as much about human psychology as it is about finance and economics.

The importance of diversifying across different companies and sectors, having a long-term investment horizon and personal finance management are even more important these days, but these are severely lacking in Nepal. An investor's main motto always has to be: buy a diversified set of companies, invest regularly, keep track of the company's financials and hold for a long period of time.

Crucial reforms now await Nepal's stock market, these can include:

- Increased participation of companies in manufacturing, agribusiness, etc.
- Strong regulation on insider trading
- Better trade settlement systems
- Increasing the limitation of 50 brokers
- Creation of index funds and exchange traded funds (ETFs)

The NEPSE Index jumped more than 100% in the past year. You could argue that its current level is a bit high, but just because it has gone up by 100% it does not mean that it is overvalued, and vice versa.

The cumulative annual growth rate of the NEPSE between 2001 and 2021 is around 12%, which is in line with the 10% return of the S&P 500 (which tracks 500

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उच्च व्याजदर

खाताका विशेषताहरू

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Landlocked Nepalis sail

Lake in Pokhara, the largest body of water she saw while growing up. "It is exciting and you don't want to miss a thing because who knows whether you will ever get to see these places again?"

Ranjit is hopeful for a 2022 revival, and hopes her seafaring adventures will take her to places like Australia and Canada where she has not yet been. "The ship offers many opportunities for personal growth," she says. "I focused on language training. To survive the monotony and the grind, you have to be able to make light of the dreary days at sea and to find solace in the company of your on-deck peers who become like family."

Dipendra Thapa has been working in the cruise line since 2006, and has visited 70 cities in the last 14 years. His previous jobs in Nepal prepared him well. But when Covid-19 hit, his ship made its way back to Italy, where he was stranded for a few months.

"There is a world of its own inside the ship and we made use of it as we waited to go home," he recalls. But once the cases started rising in Italy, crew members were isolated in single passenger cabins in the ship.

"Of course we were nervous and uncertain but my employer took the best care of us given the situation," says Thapa, who was repatriated via Qatar after a month of being isolated in single rooms with support from the Nepali mission in Geneva. He is hopeful that things will normalise soon, even though there is much uncertainty about what awaits.

"Just because we in Nepal are landlocked does not mean we shouldn't exploit sea-based opportunities," says Thapa.

Of the 853 recruiters in Nepal, only two specialise in seafarer deployment, while a few others handle both land and sea-based workers. Bhakta Bahadur Payangu at Good Alliance Overseas, has recruited over 2,000 seafarers in the last decade, and needs to ensure the maritime sector is recognised by the government before he can send Nepalis out.

In destination countries, visa rules to seafarers are very flexible as the governments realise that they are only arriving for transit to



Bijaya Ranjit had not seen a body of water larger than Fewa Lake before starting her job on cruise ships. But she had been to 40 countries in the nine months before the pandemic hit.

● Upasana Khadka

Saroj KC's first memory as a crew member in a cruise liner was being awestruck at the sight of a humongous multi-level ship docked in the Guangzhou port in China. The mammoth 17-deck ship, with an accommodation for 7,000 people, was going to be his home for the next nine months.

However, once inside he found the corridors in the crew area were narrow and maze-like, cabins were cubbyholes. He felt claustrophobic and lost.

When the pandemic hit, he was stuck in a passenger-less ship for five months, docked in a port in Malaysia. Crew members enjoyed privileges reserved for guests: larger rooms with balconies, relaxed hours, amenities and good company.

KC is one of the estimated 7,000 Nepalis who make their livelihood at sea, alongside Filipinos, Indians and Indonesians, who dominate the industry. Now in Kathmandu, he is waiting for things to normalise so he can resume his job.

Compared to land-based overseas jobs, Nepalis find the maritime jobs unique and attractive. Each contract lasts between 7-9 months, after which they get to come home for a long vacation of around 45 days.

"But while you are on the job, the work is highly demanding. There are no weekly days off and the pressure can be quite overwhelming," KC says.

The pay is comparatively better, while the crew members' entertainment is prioritised via game rooms, and crew bars and the food and living costs are taken care of. And there is the travel opportunity.

"In 9 months, I was able to see over 40 countries including France and Italy," says Bijaya Ranjit, who was always fascinated by Fewa

Nepalis leaving Hong

● Alistair Tan in Hong Kong

Over the next five years, more than 300,000 Hong Kongers are expected to emigrate to the UK according to the British Home Office. But only a few of those leaving will be from the city's 25,000 strong Nepali community.

Hong Kong is an appealing destination for Nepalis wanting to emigrate further abroad because of the country's association with the British Gurkha garrison here affords them better opportunities and privileges than other foreign workers in Hong Kong.

Thousands of British National Overseas (BNO) passport holders from Hong Kong have left for the UK fearing Chinese crackdowns, however most Nepalis are not leaving for that reason. Many families of ex-Gurkhas were already moving on to

Britain even before the crackdowns, while others were already thinking of leaving to join family members.

The majority of Nepalis who came to Hong Kong were Gurkhas stationed here when the territory was still a British colony. After the handover in 1997, a law made Gurkhas and their families eligible for permanent residency. The majority of Nepalis in the city are the children and grandchildren of these servicemen from Nepal.

"Today, Nepalis are an integral part of Hong Kong," says Uttar Man Tigela Limbu, a



solicitor in the UK and who previously lived in Hong Kong for 20 years. "The majority are permanent residents and they enjoy the same rights as any other Hong Kongers."

A 2013 survey by the City University of Hong Kong (CUHK) showed that 17% of

Nepalis worked in the construction industry, 13% in the food and beverage sector, 12% worked as security guards and 9% worked in community, social and educational sectors. Seven percent were cleaners and only 5% worked in professional and executive

the seven seas

Nepali migrants hope for post-Covid revival of jobs in the world's maritime fleet

Thousands of Nepalis like Dipendra Thapa make their livelihood at sea because of better pay, room for recreation, and the opportunity to travel the world.



Kamal Subedi worked in hospitality for a decade before training to become a maritime worker. He has a Nepali and a Panamanian seaman's passport.

use the port, so a large majority of the countries allow visas on arrival. But Nepal's rules for obtaining the mandatory labour permit requires visas as a prerequisite.

"Since years, we have tried to convince the government to accept 'okay-to-board' letters in lieu of visas for seafarers. They have become more flexible in the last few years," says Payangu. "As a recruiter, I can sleep better when I can send maritime workers because cases of abuse, non-payment of wages, contract infringement, is very low."

There is also the issue of obtaining seaman's logbook, which

is a mandatory requirement that records seafaring experiences. Nepalis currently have to obtain it from India. In 2018, Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali announced that seamen's logbook would be issued in Nepal itself, but this has not happened.

Sunil Khadka started as a busboy in a ship and moved up the ladder to become a supervisor. He is hopeful that Nepalis, who are a minority in the industry, performing well in their designated jobs can influence employer perceptions leading to increase in hiring. There have been cases where Nepalis have jumped off

ships disappearing into different countries, denting the general reputation.

Living on a ship is also lucrative because there are few expenses. An entry level person like a busboy can easily save up to Rs100,000 every month, while visiting family after every few months on employers' costs. This is much better than Nepalis with land-based jobs in Malaysia or the Gulf.

"What you earn, you keep, unless you want to spend on travels. And all this while you get to see the world," Khadka smiles, as he recounts serving Hollywood

star Johnny Depp, attending a live Bon Jovi concert and watching WWE fights on deck.

The voices of the small volume of seafarers stranded last year after the Covid-19 outbreak got lost during the repatriation mess. While they were taken care of by the employers, the majority, however, were not paid wages during the time they were stranded in quarantine.

Scattered across the globe, they have diverse experiences of homecoming. Jayaram Bhandari was in Miami at the onset of the pandemic. On the ship that brought him home, he first spent 12 days in Italy, then the ship traveled to Sri Lanka to drop off workers from there, and then to India. But given the border restrictions and the suspension of flights, the ship had to be again taken to the Philippines for the 82 Nepalis to be flown home via the government's repatriation flights.

Deepak GC joined a ship in March 2020 in South Africa. His peers whose home port was in Europe had their flights canceled and Deepak felt lucky to fly to South Africa, little realising that the next few months were going to be some of the worst in his life.

"It was my first week on the job when we were informed that the cruise was being stopped," he says. "Of the five Nepalis on board, two had a return flight for the 20th and 3 of us for the 21st. They made it just in time, whereas the three of us didn't because the lockdown in Nepal had begun. What a difference one day can make."

After getting paid for eight days of work, he spent the next six months in Durban, his home port. They started with 400 crewmembers from over 60 countries. Three hotels and 6 months later, the 3 Nepalis were the only nationalities left as all other governments repatriated their citizens.

It is only on 12 September, after six months, that they finally got to come home. Deepak recalls meeting his brother and sister-in-law in the holding center in Surkhet and tears rolling down his cheeks. "I wasn't sure if it was because I was tired, relieved... perhaps it was a mixture of all those emotions."

When *Nepali Times* met him last week, he had just completed his mandatory pre-departure orientation training required to obtain labour approval. "I am going back to the UAE and rejoining my old employer as I cannot afford to wait any longer."

Unlike many others, Rabi Raj Ranjit decided the seafarer's job was not for him. After the first nine months, he felt worn out and quit, even though the earnings were attractive. "The grind turns you into a machine, without guaranteeing a secure future as there are no opportunities for citizenship, you continuously renew your contract every year," he says.

He did not enjoy his tiny windowless cabin, and going to the same places, just moving in circles and reaching the same ports every few days. "I remember being woken up to the sound of the drawers of my closet opening and closing in the night when the sea was rough. The crew cabins are under sea-level, and the waves were loud at night."

Ranjit missed his motorcycle and being on the road and so returned for good after his first contract was over. On the positive side of the job, he says that one was always on the move. Even so, the sea was not for him. 🇳🇵



Hong Kong for UK



concern for many Nepalis than the recent crackdowns.

"For minorities, it is harder to learn and succeed in school," says Indra Wanem (pictured, left), an immigration consultant in Hong Kong, citing the lack of support for minorities and the language barrier.

The CUHK survey showed that 63% of Nepalis had language difficulties, and 26% faced problems because of their limited choice of schools. Many felt that the Hong Kong government did not provide enough support and options for Nepali students in education.

Wanem believes only a few from the minority communities in Hong Kong end up going to university. Language difficulties also affect those who are looking for employment, as 20% of Nepalis surveyed who had language issues said that they had difficulty at work.

This is one of the reasons why Nepalis

are opting to move on to the UK, Australia or Canada. Solicitor Uttar Man Tigela Limbu says he struggled to advance his career in law in Hong Kong, which is why he moved to Britain. It also gave his children better education than the one they could have received in Hong Kong.

"Going to the UK has many benefits for Nepalis, there isn't really a language barrier so it is easier to adapt. Nepali students have equal opportunities, access and chances for a higher education as well as higher paying jobs than if they were in Hong Kong," says Limbu.

For most ex-Gurkhas, emigration is also a way to be together with other members of their families from Nepal or Hong Kong who have already got UK citizenship.

However, the National Security Law and the political situation in Hong Kong, which is driving many locals to leave is not the reason the Nepali community wants to move to the UK.

"Most Nepalis here are aware of the political situation, but many don't bother," says Limbu. "They are here to work and compared to the other places, Hong Kong is still considered the best place for Nepalis to work abroad. They are treated better than in Qatar or Malaysia. And Hong Kong gives Nepalis permanent residency if they remain in the city for seven years unlike Japan and South Korea."

Although there has been an increase in emigration from Hong Kong to the UK, the Nepali community in Hong Kong seems here to stay. "The future for Nepalis in Hong Kong is not bad," says Limbu. "They will suffer a little because of the lack of freedom, and because of the Security Law people will now have to think twice before speaking out. But most Nepalis will remain in the city and reap economic benefits." 🇳🇵

positions, while 6% were students and 7% were home-makers.

Although Nepalis have been in Hong Kong for three generations they have not been treated equally, and the discrimination and lack of equal opportunities has been a bigger

EVENTS



The Women's Fair

The Women's Fair is being held with the theme, "Lead Change Inspire & Empower". The Fair aims to promote women's entrepreneurial efforts and economic empowerment to contribute to the greater goal of gender equality. 13 March, 11am, Ageo: The Hestia

Haatemalaal Festival

Be a part of the virtual Haatemalaal Festival that aims to connect artists and activists across the Dalit Bahujan Adivasi communities worldwide in the fight against the caste system, Brahminical patriarchy, and imperial structures. 13 March, 7pm



Hiking and Camping

Camp amidst the Chandragiri hills with the scenic view of the Himalayas in the day and starry nights after sundown. Register here. 12 March, 12:30am



Otaku Jatra Mini

Gear up for cosplays amid a full day celebration of comic and pop culture. 13 March, 11AM, Gokarna



Saturday market

Wind down from the week and relish the Saturday brunch with an acoustic set by none other than Karma Sherpa. 13 March, 1pm, Palace view cafe and resto



With the temperature climbing to the 30s in the Tarai plains, the updrafts will lead to afternoon buildups over the mountains. These will continue to cause brief but sharp isolated thunderstorms across Central Nepal. On top of this, there is a westerly front moving through, which is likely to bring rain in Kathmandu on Saturday and snow in the mountains to the north.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
26° 12°	24° 10°	24° 11°

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 5 - 11 March



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
Feb 26	Feb 27	Feb 28	March 1	March 2	March 3	March 4

Once again, the daily average Air Quality Index (AQI) in the Kathmandu city centre remained uncomfortably red in the 'Unhealthy' zone throughout the week. But the spring showers kept the concentration of particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns well under 200. Air quality is expected to remain the same more or less as the industrial pollution haze from the Gangetic plains is replaced by wind-blown sand from the Thar desert, and the carried up the Himalayan valleys by prevailing afternoon winds.

ONLINE ARCHIVES



Virtual street festivals

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



Kurzgesagt

Kurzgesagt - In a Nutshell creates animated educational content on scientific, technological, political, philosophical and psychological subjects. If teachers, parents, or casual viewers are looking for creative educational material, head on to the Kurzgesagt YouTube channel.

JSTOR

Need resources for assignments, a thesis, or a research project? JSTOR has hundreds of ebooks and academic journals on its platform as open access content.



The world at home

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

VICE
Watch documentaries about anything and everything from all over the world, on the VICE YouTube channel. Start from documentaries about Nepal's honey harvesters, The Nepalese Honey That Makes People Hallucinate, as well as the most recent documentary on human trafficking in Nepal.

DINING



Kung Fu Noodles

Kung Fu Noodles is a Chinese restaurant with a wide range of noodles and soups. It reflects the amazing food culture of China, which says you don't have to work too hard for great food. JP road 986-8552937



Jimbu Thakali Kitchen

Jimbu makes Thakali meals accessible to the public and to tourists. The ambience of the restaurant gives a Thakali air and it is certainly the most fitting setting to experience bona fide Thakali cuisine. Jhamsikhel 01-4437674

1905

1905 has an air of peace and serenity in the midst of the busy-ness of Kathmandu. This is a charming restaurant centrally located but hidden away in a beautiful courtyard. Great menu choices and service can satisfy locals as well as tourists. Naxal (01)4411348



Cafe Imago dei

Visit for the best cheesecake in town and stay for their variety of meals. Imago is also popular for either business meetings and private conferences if the quiet ambience of Naxal is what one is looking for. Gairidhara 980-3064809

Country Yard Restaurant and Bar

Country yard is popular for its royalty flavored multi-cuisine delicacies, ranging from Nepali, Indian, Chinese to Continental delicacies. Quench your hunger with their firewood pizzas. Paknaji 9808827029



OUR PICK

In writer-director Emerald Fennell's feature film debut Promising Young Woman, haunted by the death of her best friends, medical school dropout Cassie is on a path of vengeance. Barista by day and huntress by night, she frequents the local bars and nightclubs, pretending to be drunk while targeting predators who prey on women. Stars Carey Mulligan, Bo Burnham, Laverne Cox, Alison Brie, and Jennifer Coolidge.

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GALLERY TIME 12 PM TO 7 PM

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फोन: नं. ९०९८ मा खबर गरौं।

नेपाल सरकार
सञ्चार तथा सूचना प्रविधि मन्त्रालय
सूचना तथा प्रसारण विभाग

Myanmar on my mind

A famous Nepali saying goes: 'Your karma will follow you even if you go to Burma.'

● Pratibha Tuladhar

Myanmar confuses me. Or perhaps it's Burma. What is the correct way to speak of your country, I ask. My friend of Karen ethnicity pauses, looks at nothing in particular for a while and then answers: Burma is what the British called us, then the military junta formalised it as Myanmar when they took over.

Which do you prefer? I ask.

Neither. But given the situation we are in, I'd rather say Burma, he says.

...

The humidity swallows me. The heat feels different from that of Chiang Mai, from where I have flown in, because the air sticks to me.

As Bhauju and I walk along Enya lake, I cannot help notice that the banks are dotted with couples leaning into each other, some kissing. I try to look away, but as we walk around the lake, they are everywhere, sticking together in the sweltering heat.

I would later ask a friend about the ostentatious loves of Yangon and he would tell me they are all young people from all over the country, who work in the city and live in tight accommodations. Migrants, he would say. Not people from Yangon.

A boat cuts across Enya, creating a silhouette of itself in the shadow beneath it, and for a moment, I feel as though I could fall in love, too.

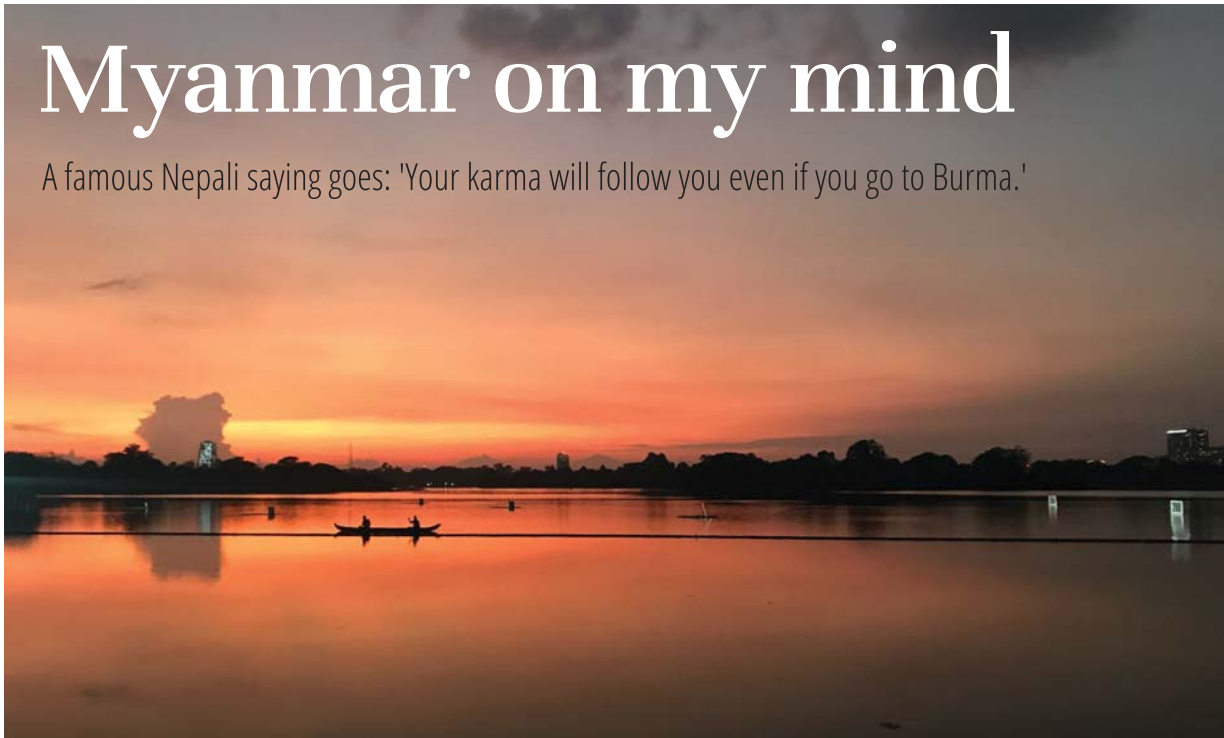
Let's sit down? I say. And Bhauju and I have a moment of quiet, even as behind us, the roar of vehicles and the chatter of voices drown out our thoughts. But our quiet doesn't last us too long.

We are greeted by a couple: "Namaste!"

Bhauju and the couple take off in Nepali.

...

Evenings are better for walking. I go down Kabar Aye Pagoda Road. The feeling of being in a new city where no one knows you is liberating. I'm almost smiling



PRATIBHA TULADHAR

to myself at the notion of this newfound freedom, when I'm rudely interrupted by a taxi driver.

Welcome to Yangon! Nice, big. He grins and I feel like I've instantly been transported from Southeast to South Asia. While I had enjoyed drawing no attention to my body in Chiang Mai, in Yangon I am confronted by what I had long left behind—eve-teasing.

It strikes me that I am on the fringes of South Asia. I guess, I feel like I am back home.

...

Bhauju lets me borrow a *lyongi*. Unlike the lungi worn by women in Nepal, this one comes with a zipper that lets me fasten it to my waist, without having to tie it to keep it there. It lets me walk around without having to worry it might slip.

As I flip-flop in the direction of my office, passersby cast casual glances at me, but without genuine interest. I return their gaze, my eyes screening the dark *lyongi* men wear to compliment their light-coloured shirts. My attention is trapped by the intricate patterns on women's *lyongis*, each design speaking of the province and ethnicity of the wearer.

I clutch the centerfold of my *lyongi* now and then, in an attempt to make sure it doesn't get tucked between my legs causing me to trip. I marvel at the grace with which

men ride past me on their bicycles, dressed exactly as I am.

Next door to the office, a school bus pulls over and children jump out of it and run into the school building. Each one of them wears a green *lyongi* held at their waist, and a pastel green shirt.

When I step inside the office, the girl who runs office errands and whose name I cannot recall, smiles wider than usual. My colleagues tell me *lyongi* becomes me.

You could stay here forever. No one would think you're not one of us, they say.

Until I open my mouth? I ask. They laugh.

...

The YBS bus— red, green, yellow—drives around the city. When it stops to pick passengers, they step in with their umbrellas and their lunch baskets. When it stops again, they get off. A cash box is set near the door, into

which passengers drop coins equivalent to the length of ride they hitch. No one checks if they have paid. No one leaves without paying.

How does this work? I ask Bhauju.

I know, she says. Wouldn't have worked in Nepal. But people here are religious and they believe in virtue. They pay.

We get off and walk around the city and nostalgia comes at me in waves. I feel like I'm walking some forgotten street in Calcutta. The buildings at the Mahabandoola park near Sule Pagoda bear remnants of the colonial era, a street flanked by a church, a mosque and a pagoda, adjacent to one another.

Jostling against this memory of its colonial past, on the other side of the city is the Myanmar Plaza, where the mall rises along wide, clean streets, a reminder of where the country was headed since it transitioned into quasi-democracy.

We stop at an Indian restaurant at the mall that serves the best Indian food. As we slurp our *rasmali*, I tell Bhauju: This country confuses me. But I'm starting to think of it as the confluence between south and east Asia. Looks like India, but has a different feel. People look like they could all be from Nepal or from Thailand, but they are not.

Asia is like a great, long river that repeatedly flows into itself, no? 🇳🇵

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TURKISH AIRLINES

VACCINE DIPLOMACY: Health Minister Hridayesh Tripathi receives 348,000 doses of the Covid-19 vaccine delivered under the COVAX initiative at Kathmandu airport on Sunday.



US EMBASSY

GIRLS POWER: Rights activist Muskan Khatun, who received the 2021 International Women of Courage Award, for her work to end acid attacks, with President Bidya Devi Bhandari.



AMIT MACHAMASI

UP IN THE AIR: A sky-diving event with the backdrop of Dharara on Nepal Army Day, coinciding with Shivratri. The show was witnessed by top government officials.



INDIAN EMBASSY

BUILDING BACK BETTER: Indian Ambassador Vinay Mohan Kwatra with mayor of Lalitpur municipality Chiribabu Maharjan lay the foundation stone for reconstruction of Kumari Chhen and in Patan on Tuesday.



MANISHA KOIRALA/TWITTER

MUSIC OF THE SOUL: Nepali Bollywood actress Manisha Koirala during a Mahamrityunjay recital with an instrumental band Sur Sudha this week in Kathmandu.



‘Boys will be boys’ is never an excuse

Addressing violence against women should start at home

Imagine living in a world, where walking down the street, there is no fear of any cat calls or scary groping. Many girls and women live their lives afraid of how it will be when they walk to school or to work.



LIFE TIME
Anjana Rajbhandary

Unfortunately, it is not limited to the time to get to the destination but also the possibility of how the teachers, coworkers or bosses stare at their chests, make inappropriate comments, or offer unwanted touch.

‘Eve-teasing’ is the term referred to public acts of sexual harassment that includes and may not be limited to whistling, making explicit comments and touching inappropriately. It embarrasses and humiliates women in varying degrees and forms. It is a violation of women’s rights and can give rise to violence against women. Yet, it is taken lightly majority of the time.

Every form of harassment towards women is a form of objectifying women and shows lack of respect. Many justify such acts as ‘natural tendency’ for men to behave, but it should never be an excuse. Most women pretend it never happened because of the fear of the consequences associated with confronting the perpetrator.

A shopkeeper touched my arm in Thamel, once. I continued to walk as if nothing had happened, but my sister who was with me confronted the man, who only kept smiling. The discomfort felt by women who experience such incidences can be intense and can leave one without the ability to instantly react. What is actually problematic is that the men who commit such acts feel no shame or remorse.

The daily occurrence of ‘eve-teasing’ often leads to many girls and women avoiding going to school or work because they do not feel safe. The term, ‘eve-teasing’

rooted in biblical reference, is bothersome as it places the blame on women, portraying them as the agent of seduction. Also, the term ‘teasing’ means to tempt someone. Therefore, even the term ‘eve-teasing’ tends to put the blame on women as being responsible for what unfolds.

The negative connotation implies that the woman is a ‘seductive temptress’ who tantalises men and thereby tries to justify men’s actions as if men have no control over it. How often have we heard at the heels of sexual assault that the women were dressed in a way that they were ‘asking for it’?

The society tends to downplay the severity of ‘eve-teasing’ if there has been no physical harm to the women saying ‘boys will be boys’, but such acts need to be addressed and have consequences for the perpetrator. No one should have to be physically harmed or killed for this intolerable act to be taken seriously. Harassment of women is a despicable and brutal violation of human rights.

‘Eve-teasing’ is a big problem in South Asia that needs more attention. ‘India’s Daughter’ documented the horrific rape case in Delhi in 2012 and that is but one example of how sexual harassment and assault towards women can take a turn for the worst.

Teasing and harassment of women is a significant problem in Nepal and sadly it is accepted as a normal in our society. Boys and men need to be made aware and educated about the severity of such crimes and subjected to punishment if guilty.

The Government of Nepal has laws to address violence against women, but there is a gap when it comes to their implementation.

Anu, 17, on her way to school gets whistled at by construction workers. She walks silently, looking down, cringing at the thought of her daily route. There are many others who share her experience.

Sita, 25, was groped on the bus one day: “He continued to look at

me after he did that, and I continued to feel ashamed.”

Violence against women causes trauma and can lead to feelings of distress, helplessness, and other mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and thoughts of suicide. What may seem like a harmless dirty glance, offensive comment can often lead to rape and death.

Some men act that way to prove their manliness to their friends. It is important for all parents to have a conversation with their sons on the proper way to treat women, and it is a difficult conversation to have but they are usually the most important. Parents need to raise their sons, so they are never the reason a girl’s reputation is scarred or she feels used or afraid.

Men will never understand the fear women experience daily. Men do not understand the struggles women experience everyday regarding their safety. A male friend of mine says he never wants to have a daughter, not because he discriminates between men and women, but he would be scared for her.

We need to create a safe environment for all genders so one does not live in fear of the other. The silence of women should not be perceived as weakness. Men need to acknowledge that when they are disrespecting women, they are disrespecting their own creators.

It is time, we stopped making excuses and men start learning to respect themselves so they can respect women. Every girl is someone’s daughter. 🇳🇵



LIFE TIME

Watch the video accompanying a new installment of Anjana Rajbhandary’s column Life Time in which she talks about how the decision to if and when to have a baby depends entirely on the woman.

Who were the Charitraheen Cheli?

17 years before the current street rallies for women's rights, a feminist group had shocked the Kathmandu patriarchy

• Sajana Baral

On 5 March 2004, a clandestine feminist movement emerged in Kathmandu and in a 40-point declaration printed in *Nepali Times* to coincide with International Women's Day, denounced Nepal's patriarchal order.

They called themselves the *Charitraheen Cheli* (Women of Ill Repute) and their manifesto was a 'declaration of independence', denouncing dowry, gender-based violence and discrimination.

Point number 9 read: 'We may have breasts, vaginas, clitorises and wombs; we also have kidneys, livers, lungs, stomachs, hearts, pancreases, intestines, fingers and toes, nails, arms, legs, pubic-hair, skin, eyes, ears, mouth, lips and tongues. All people have independent minds, spirits and souls.'

Long before the Women's March and 15 years ahead of the international #MeToo Movement, *Charitraheen Cheli* in Nepal laid the groundwork for activism on issues that are just as relevant today as the country records daily cases of rape, killings and sexual assaults, with the state still treating its women as second class citizens.

The declaration and subsequent contributions in newspapers created ripples and rumours, and the group were eventually criticised for abandoning the cause, as its anonymous members drifted and



their movement fizzled out.

Another point in the declaration read: 'Which idiot would think women should have the permission of their fathers/husbands/guardians to obtain passports, or to travel and work abroad? (The same idiots who framed our Civil Code, that's who). Having reached the age of 18, we exercise the right for complete freedom of movement. Instead of curbing this freedom, the state should fulfill its obligation to provide women with protection, via consulates, in the foreign countries in which we travel, work

and reside.'

Seventeen years later, a government department last month tried to restrict the movement of women by requiring all females under 40 to have a written consent from a male family member and a ward official before travelling abroad.

'Enough is enough,' wrote the team in a phrase that has since been used in the Rage Against Rape rallies in Kathmandu. The group added that since marching from Bhadrakali to Singha Darbar with a placard is mostly a waste of time and bad for the lungs,

it was resorting to 'non-violent guerilla tactics'.

The 40-point declaration was also published in Nepali in *Kantipur* and gave way to speculation about the identity of its members. Guesswork bracketed them as 'educated, English-speaking, foreign-bred, elite women from Kathmandu'.

'We are underground because it's fun down there,' retorted the *Charitraheen*. 'We are everywhere around you, on the streets, in your office and even in your home. You are being watched!!!'

A counter-group calling itself *Chatrirawan Chela* (Men of Good Character) then issued and disclosed that the Cheli had surnames like, Pradhan, Sharma, Ranjit and Thapa, noting that Ranjit was a 'painter' — clearly identifying the artist Ashmina Ranjit (pictured, left).

Ranjit admitted this week in an interview that she was a member, adding: "We used to discuss if we should come out. But for many friends, because of family obligations and safety, it wasn't possible. We were conflicted because we were all products of a conservative society, so we decided to remain unknown."

Ranjit refused to divulge the identity of her comrades, but said they were singers, writers, journalists, musicians and filmmakers.

"Although we came from different backgrounds, we had one

objective, which was to dismantle the structure of patriarchy," Ranjit said. "We had been doing our own bit at the individual level before that, but it felt like it was essential to do it collectively."

Some labeled the group as 'elite', but Ranjit rejects the term. The seeds of the group were sown in 1998, when Ranjit had put up an art exhibit, 'Women and Sexuality' after which she was viciously criticised.

"I had a fight with my father and I left home. My work was branded as sordid. Fighting your family is harder than fighting the world," she recalls. "There were alarming incidents of violence against women at that time. We wanted to retaliate and that's how the declaration came about."

The choice of the term '*Charitarraheen*' was also often questioned. But Ranjit said that since women are often judged on the basis of their 'character', the group wanted to question society's norm.

"Basically, who are you to define my character? That was the question we wanted to ask society at that time. The patriarchy made women's character a weapon against them. *Charitraheen* was our way of defying that," she said.

Ranjit is glad that the group's activism has carried on over the years in different forms, and a whole new generation of Nepali women are now carrying on the struggle: "It's tiring, but we have no luxury to be tired." 🇳🇵

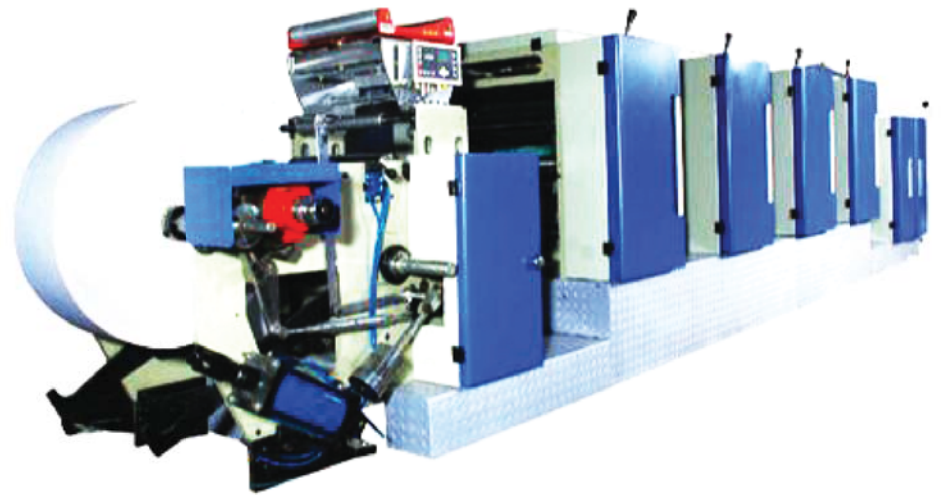
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Nepal should now allow visa

● **Sonia Awale**

It was exactly a year ago that Nepal went into lockdown after detecting its second case of Covid-19, devastating the tourism industry and impacting the economy. But despite a falling infection rate and the arrival of vaccines, the government has been slow to reopen tourism and restore the livelihoods of millions of Nepalis.

Instead of resuming visa on arrival, for instance, the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation and the Department of Immigration have a cumbersome and confusing process in place that is deterring all but the most determined travellers.

Although Nepal Tourism Board announced last week that recommendation letters for visas can now come from any entity in Nepal (not just trekking and mountaineering agencies) visitors still need visas before travelling, PCR negative test results, paid-for 7-day hotel quarantine in Kathmandu, \$5,000 in insurance, and a second PCR at the end of quarantine.

"There has been no clear announcement on vaccinated passengers, the visa requirement is arbitrary and no one is checking about quarantines," says one travel trade executive. "The rules sound very strict, and that is keeping prospective tourists away."

Already, 500,000 Nepalis have got their first jabs of the Covishield vaccines, and another 2 million

Even before vaccine passports, the government needs to ease entry procedures for visitors

are expected to have both doses by May. While international airlines and some countries are issuing vaccine passes, the Nepal government says it is waiting for clear international guidelines.

"As of now we haven't decided on a vaccine passport, particularly because there are now multiple variants of the coronavirus and one vaccine might not work against all of them," says Khajrah Baral of the Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre (CCMC), adding that the World Health Organization (WHO) is yet to provide a clear-cut protocol for vaccine passports.

He adds: "It might look like there is no pandemic anymore in Nepal and life is back to normal, but let us not mistake this drop in the caseload to think that the worst is over. We have to wait to resume full international travel."

After lukewarm response to the first phase of Nepal's vaccination drive that saw 429,705 frontline workers take



shots, the ongoing second phase aims to vaccinate 1.6 million people above 65 years from 6,000 vaccine centres across the country. This is 8.73% of Nepal's total population.

"Once this population is covered we will start to see visible benefits of the vaccination drive," says Shyam Raj Uprety, head of the Government Covid Vaccine Strategy.

The government is now using

the first batch of the two million doses of Covishield it purchased from Serum Institute of India last month. On Sunday, Nepal received another 348,000 doses of the vaccine under the COVAX initiative. Later this month, China is also expected to donate 500,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccine.

As the vaccination drive gains speed, in Nepal and across the world (over 305 million doses

have been administered so far), documentation of inoculation status will become vital to ease crossborder travel. Soon, vaccine passports might be essential for all international journeys.

On Tuesday, China became the first country to rollout Covid-19 vaccine passports that show details of inoculation and results of nucleic acid and antibody tests. Chinese citizens can now register for the

Covid's collateral damage

One year after the lockdown, the pandemic has left the lives of many Nepalis in tatters



One year after Nepal went into a Covid-19 nationwide lockdown, there has been enormous economic fallout. While most reports have focussed on the impact on Nepal's GDP growth rate, companies that have gone bankrupt and Nepal's macro-economy, largely forgotten are stories of individual hardship.

Despite the breakthrough vaccine development in the past year, the pandemic continues to impact millions of Nepalis. Those with means changed their professions, others are surviving on loans. But the pandemic-induced economic fallout means half of Nepali households are at risk of falling back into poverty.

This week, the Himalmedia video magazine, *Saglo Samaj* interviewed farmers, tourist guides, hotel operators and taxi drivers most affected by the crisis.

No country for farmers

Buffalo milk is the only source of income for farmers in Kamdi village of Banke. But for six months during the pandemic, they could not sell their milk, and even now do not get a fair price.

Farmers take the rest of their milk to the Dairy Development Corporation's collection point, but payment is slow. Local dairies also buy some to make dairy products but with the tourism sector which consumes most of these products down, milk sales have been all-time low.

"We sell some milk but the price is not good. Some days you get money, other times you don't. We live in misery," says dairy farmer Ramnaresh Yadav.

Tulsiram Yadav has 13 buffaloes and used



to sell 20 litres of milk a day. "This is what us illiterate people do, raise buffaloes, sell milk, there is no other occupation," he says. "Milk did not sell well this winter, sometimes even the dairy doesn't buy, and we have no income."

Guiding life

Uttara Manandhar has been a tourist guide, but lost her job after tourists stopped coming last year.

"I know of many guides who changed their profession due to the crisis. I got into teaching myself. But we still have an attachment to the tourism sector and find it hard to adapt to other fields," she says.

She says she will get back to being a guide once tourists return. "In the past year, I have been reading and writing a lot. I'm ready for tourists to come back so that I can share my knowledge with them," Manandhar adds.

Shankar Bhattarai had been a tourist guide for 11 years, and also turned to teaching after the tourism sector collapsed.

"Even if I am in a classroom, I dream of

travelling to the mountains," says Bhattarai. "The hardest part is to adjust to a new job."

He says tourist guides could have been integrated into the Department of Archaeology to help in excavation work, adding: "We are ready to transfer our knowledge. Don't leave us in this limbo."

End of hospitality

The lockdown devastated the tourism industry, with least 1 million people losing their jobs. Luxury hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara laid off hundreds of workers.

"We aren't asking the hotels for 100% salary. We just want simple meals and enough money to pay school fees of our children," says Kamal Ghimire of the Nepal Independent Hotel, Casino and Restaurant Workers' Union.

The Airport Hotel in Kathmandu is a 3-star property with 62 rooms. Because of its location outside the gate of the airport, it used to consistently have 70% occupancy. The past year was a washout, and now barely 7% of the rooms are occupied.

"The hotel used to be very crowded

and even with our 100 staff, we used to hire additional workers to manage all the parties, seminars and conferences," says owner Binayak Shah. "Today, we are working with about 10 employees and yet we are finding it difficult to pay wages or the electricity bill."

He says the pandemic has been worse than the Maoist insurgency, adding: "It is much more profitable to run a school or a hospital."

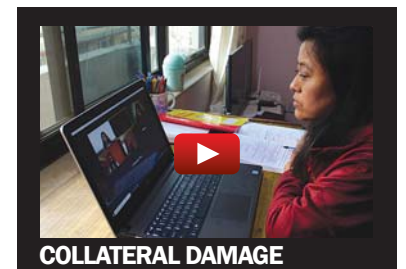
No alternative to migration

Ganesh Tamang worked abroad for six months and with his Rs500,000 savings bought a taxi. Unable to keep up with loan repayment, the bank took possession of the vehicle.

"I still get up at five in the morning but instead of driving, I go to feed and milk my buffaloes," says Tamang, who is now raising livestock and poultry to make a living.

Sagar Bohora also used to ply a taxi in Kathmandu for 16 hours a day, preferring to work in Nepal rather than toil in a foreign land. But with income nearly zero for the past year, he struggles to pay the medical bills of his elderly mother and his children's education.

"My heart is against it, but I have no alternative but to go abroad," he says. "I can't sleep at night thinking about my piling debts."



COLLATERAL DAMAGE

Watch Saglo Samaj video of people who have lost their jobs and livelihoods due to the lockdown and pandemic, and how they are coping with the economic impact. Himalmedia's Saglo Samaj tv magazine program is broadcast every Monday evening at 8:30pm on DishHome channel 130.

on arrival



certification on both digital and paper formats using a WeChat mini program.

Several countries, including Denmark and Sweden, are also said to be finalising a version of health passports even though there is no accepted international standard yet for such documents or apps. There are also ethical concerns regarding the right of people who chose not to vaccinate, or those who cannot

vaccinate because of medical conditions.

Indeed, according to the Madrid-based World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), one in three destinations worldwide are completely closed to international tourism, with the emergence of new Brazil, south Africa and UK variants prompting many governments to reverse efforts to ease travel.

“As we work to restart tourism,

we must recognise that restrictions are just one part of the solution,” said Zurab Polilikashvili of the WTO during a press meet this week. “Their use must be based on the latest data and analysis and consistently reviewed so as to allow for the safe and responsible restart of a sector upon which many millions of businesses and jobs depend.”

The International Air Transport

Association (IATA) is launching a digital travel pass later this month that will provide airlines and governments documentation of travellers’ inoculation or test result.

Qatar Airways, Emirates, Etihad Airways, Air New Zealand, Copa Airlines, RwandAir and Singapore Airlines have already signed up for the platform, with Chinese and Indian airlines registering soon.

“As a tourism dependent country that has been hit hardest, the government should introduce an immunity passport and waive quarantine for travellers possessing one,” says Prativa Pandey of CIWEC Clinic Travel Medicine Centre in Kathmandu. “Now that large chunks of the US and the EU have been vaccinated we can boost tourism by easing their entry.”

But before working on vaccine passports, industry experts say Nepal must first streamline needlessly convoluted and unenforceable entry procedures for arriving passengers. Nepal opened regular domestic flights in September last year, and passenger volume has surpassed pre-Covid levels. However, arrival restrictions have meant that tourist traffic is still stagnant.

In February, 9,146 foreigners arrived in Kathmandu by air – less than 10% of pre-pandemic figures for the month. Of these, most were Indians, followed by Chinese, Americans and Europeans.

Nepal’s hospitality industry was expecting steady growth in numbers by the spring trekking season, and trade officials had

been lobbying for visa on arrival and reduced quarantine times which the government, mired in a political crisis, has ignored.

Foreigners flying to Nepal still need a visa before arrival from an embassy abroad or pre-approval or recommendation letter a travel agency or government department. All travellers must have Covid-19 negative test result obtained within 72 hours prior to departure. Passengers are also subjected to seven days of hotel quarantine at their own cost, 10 for those coming in from countries with a variant strain.

“We have to make our travel procedures as hassle free as possible to boost arrivals. And there is no point of quarantine if it isn’t even monitored and tourists are instead spending that time in Pokhara or Chitwan,” says Pandey.

Meanwhile, Safe Nepal Travel, a project supported by the National Geographic Society has launched a website to revive trekking and climbing tourism in Nepal. In the next two months, the site will provide readers latest guidelines from WHO, Nepal government, hospitals and the travel industry in Kathmandu.

Says Alton C Byres of Safe Nepal Travel: “Through the provision of timely and reliable information related to safe trekking, climbing, travel, and safety protocols, we hope to facilitate the return of adventure tourism to Nepal as soon as possible.”

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Many of you who cannot make head or tail of the recent trends in Nepali politics have SMSed me in the past week to ask: Will Share Budder become prime minister again? Is it possible for Nepal to finally graduate to middle-income country status? And also, does God exist?

As a media analyst it is incumbent upon me to refer you to a more competent astrologer who has predicted that the planets are favourably aligned to make Deuba prime minister of Nepal up to a total of seven times. At last count he had only made it to #4, so he has three more match points to go.



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- Unified Marxist-Leninists (Nepal)
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- Nepal Communist Party (Royalist)
- Nepal Communist Party (Gang of Four)
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- Communist Party of Nepal (Pvt Ltd)
- Nepal Communist Party Marxism-Stalinism-Maoism (MSM)
- Communal Party of Nepal (Polpotist-Maduroist-Kim Il-Sungist)

However, even dyed-in-red communists are beginning to admit that the time may have finally come for the party to re-brand itself after political philosophers like Groucho Marx and John Lennon, while at the same time remaining true to its revolutionary antecedents. Allow me to suggest the following formulations:

- Nepal Communist Party (Groucho-Lennonist)
- Communicative Party of Nepal (Facebook-TikTok)
- Nepal Communicable Party (Covid-19)
- Nepal Commuter Party (Monorail)

The acronyms will get to be even more complicated if, and when, the various permutations of the next coalition government become clearer:

- UML-JSP (KPO)
- MC-NC-JSP (BRB)
- MC-NC-JSP (RCP)
- MC-NC-JSP (SBD)
- UML-MC (JNK)
- UML-MC (PKD)
- UML-MC (MKN)

The only problem is that the 2017 Constitution has an open-defecation free law that prohibits horse-trading. The Ass takes umbrage at the speciesist language insinuating that it is only horses that get to be traded. How about us donkeys, aren't we also good enough to be bought and sold by the highest bidders? Why isn't anyone ass-trading? Why discriminate?

To which I am sure you are dying to also ask: Is God a he or a she?



The Ass

- Nepal Communist Party (Un-unified)
- Communist Party of Nepal (Unfit)
- Communist Party of Nepal (Big Plop)
- Underferd Marxist-Leninists (UML)

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