

COVID'S LESSON FOR TOP BRASS

MIT DATA SCIENTIST: LOCKDOWNS NOT CORRELATED WITH FEWER DEATHS BUT ARE CORRELATED WITH MORE UNEMPLOYMENT

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BUSINESS 360°

**A LOOK AT
WHAT'S
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POLITICS OF HEALTH

**Could The Former Minister
Have Delivered?**

HRIDAYESH TRIPATHI

Former Minister Of Health & Population





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I am beginning to lose sight of the many acts of inefficiency and sheer callousness and corruption that we are mired in as a government, despite being in the midst of a pandemic that is fast becoming a heavy burden on the slowly weakening shoulders of its citizens.

While the country was struggling to breathe, the government was playing power sharing games far removed from the plight of its people, some who were fighting a losing battle for their loved ones left now with anger, grief and a lifetime of regret. Among the people we lost at this time was a man who was dedicated to bringing the youth to the main stage of politics, Ujwal Thapa. From an activist for entrepreneurship to a civil activist and thereon leading civil movements and dedicating his life to building the next leaders of Nepal, Ujwal Thapa resonates with the passion and belief of a majority of young Nepalis who want to make a meaningful difference to the country through values of integrity, transparency and common sense. They say when your time comes, nothing can stop it, but I will always question whether the Covid 19 that claimed so many lives including Ujwal's was in part government failure to contain and respond to the pandemic with appropriate and timely measures of action.

While lockdowns are put into place, often without clarity of purpose and timeliness, we are now also standing at the brink of an economic tsunami that will wash away the livelihoods and lives of businesses into oblivion. Yes the virus is unknown to us and maybe – just maybe, we lack the expertise in the right places to strategise, predict and implement action plans to deal with the pandemic, but all of these can also be outsourced. All it requires is the ability to evaluate how much we know and what do we need help with.

Questions on business integrity have also come to the fore especially in cases of over pricing medicines, oxygen and medical equipment that almost every other person who could afford has paid illogical high prices for. At a time when the government has been unable to deliver on the second dose of the Covisheild vaccine for senior citizens, it is available to those who can pay for it or who have the right connections. The government procurement process remains questionable. And the fact also remains that lack of clarity in economic policies and lack of transparency remain bottlenecks for the private sector to step in and help fulfill the demand.

This is a time for all segments of society to come together to ensure the best possible solutions and outcomes for people. This is the time to collaborate on our strengths and focus on the most important issues threatening the wellbeing of the country and its people. Unfortunately the caretakers of the nation are playing at politics of pretence.

Charu Chadha
editor

BIZ INDICATORS

FOREX MARKET	18.05.2021	18.05.2021	Year ago
USD	118.18	116.87	121.82
GBP	163.19	165.81	151.35
Chinese Renminbi (Yuan)	18.31	18.19	17.19
Indian Rupee (INR 100)	160.00	160.00	160.00
Euro	140.16	142.82	136.47
Australian Dollar	-	-	-
GOVERNMENT SECURITIES	Lowest	Highest	Weighted Avg.
Discount rate of T-bill (Subject to latest issuance)			
Treasury bills (28 days)	0.971	4.770	2.129
Treasury bills (91 days)	3.959	5.220	4.682
Treasury bills (182 days)	3.750	4.330	4.172
Treasury bills (364 days)	4.100	4.630	4.445
PRICE INDICES	May20/21(p)	May19/20(p)	May18/19(p)
National Consumer Price Index (base year 2014/15 = 100)	138.54	133.67	126.30

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COULD THE FORMER MINISTER HAVE DELIVERED?

HRIDAYESH TRIPATHI
FORMER MINISTER OF HEALTH & POPULATION



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ECONOMICS

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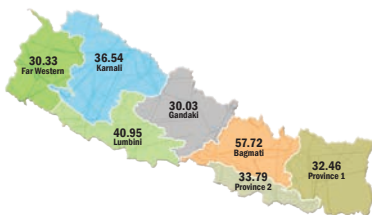
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A good leader should first become a good person. It also teaches us about how persistence, passion, empathy and love for your work will make you a good leader, and a happy one too.



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POLITICS OF HEALTH

Could The Former Minister Have Delivered?

HRIDAYESH TRIPATHI
Former Minister Of Health & Population

The second wave of the Covid 19 pandemic that erupted from mid-April claimed the lives of 1.4% from 344,779 people infected across the country, despite administration enforcing tough lockdown to restrict movement of people to stem the spread of coronavirus. Though the country initiated inoculation drive from January 27 with an aim to immunise its entire eligible population within three months; it failed. Vaccine procurement was mired

in controversy and lack of transparency. Till date, senior citizens who had received the first dose of the Covishield vaccine are waiting for the second dose which is in a controversial procurement quagmire. Nepal in the meantime received one million Vero cell vaccines in donation from China. The Covid 19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) program has also been affected as manufacturers have failed to provide vaccines as assured to the COVAX basket.

Against this backdrop, the country's health facilities

encountered unprecedented challenges as hospitalisation rate of Covid 19 patients went up exponentially and there were severe shortages of adequate medicine, oxygen, ventilators, etc. Medical human resource was also overstretched and there was panic amongst the public. Additionally it must be pointed out that huge parts of rural and remote Nepal have been left out of the government's radar for health access.

Business 360 caught up with the now erstwhile Minister for Health and Population,

Hridayesh Tripathi to learn about the efforts of the ministry to combat the pandemic.

Tripathi is seasoned politician who has fought for a long time to establish issues of Terai-Madhesh into the mainstream agenda of national politics. Within days of this interview, Tripathi resigned from his position after Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli decided to reshuffle the cabinet following the dissolution of the parliament last month. This interview was conducted when he was the country's health minister. Excerpts: ▶▶

What are the main challenges before you as the Health Minister of Nepal?

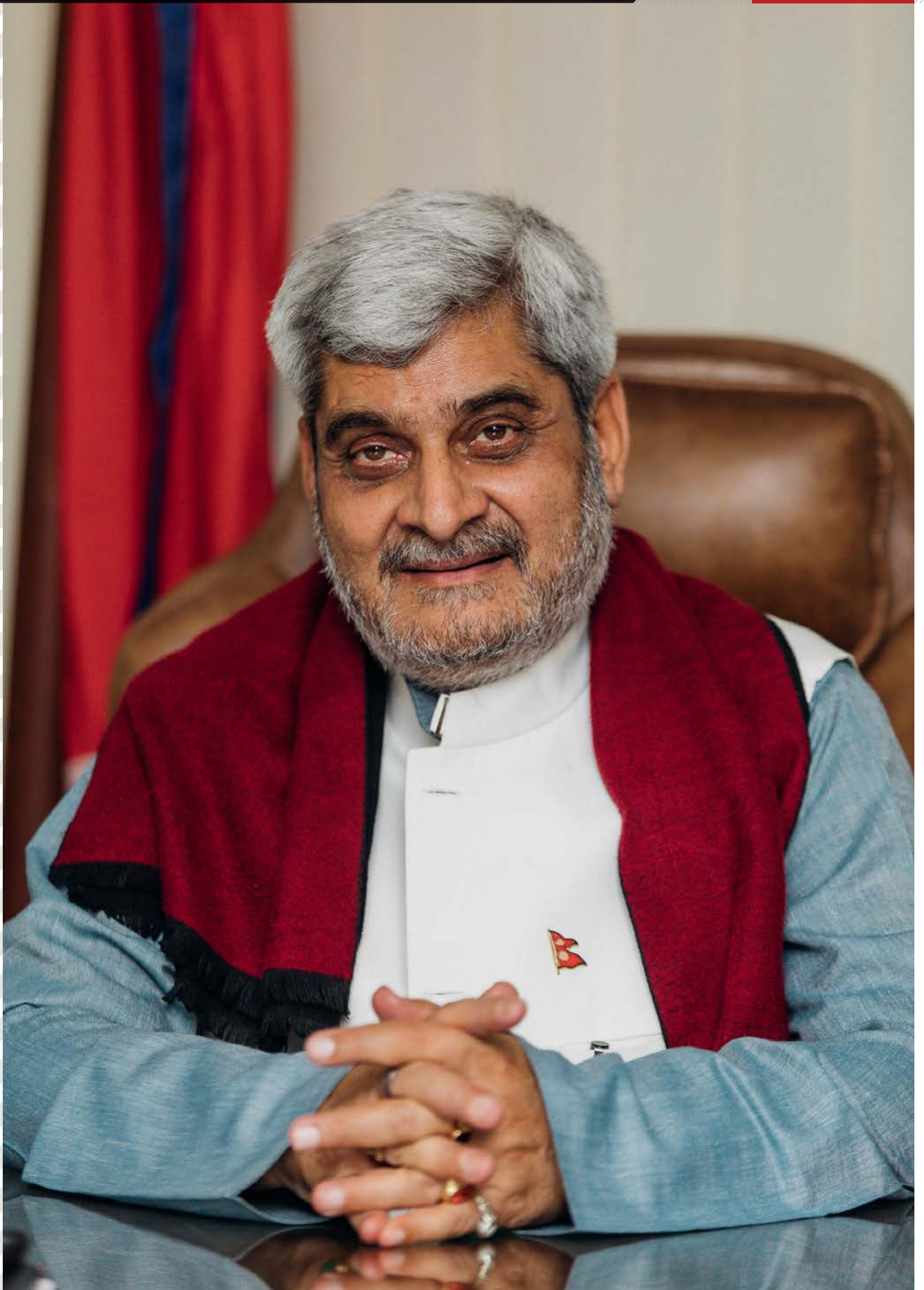
When I had assumed office on December 25 last year, I was focused on reviving the reputation of the Ministry of Health and Population. I had promised three things while assuming charge of the ministerial portfolio—assuring vaccines against Covid-19 and

its management; facilitation for the execution of 5, 10 and 15 bed hospitals to the local level governments, and readjusting health workers facing trouble from the new adjustment of health workers/professionals in the federal structure. I was working in that spirit to fulfill my commitments. In the meantime, the country encountered a second wave

of the Covid 19 pandemic and it became more lethal and massively spread across the country posing threat to the human lives. Hospitalisation rate went up substantially as respiratory diseases escalated among the infected which ultimately created pressure on health facilities. Demand for oxygen surged nearly six folds than the normal consumption,

it was more challenging to manage oxygen, ventilators and critical care units and intensive care units for covid patients.

What I realised while combating the unprecedented challenges is we had to have a unified health system. Though we have a federal structure and allocation of businesses accordingly but we need a unified health system to





At the onset when I had assumed office, I had said that the vaccine is not only a medical tool, it is also a commercial commodity as well as political commodity. Analysing the ongoing vaccine diplomacy, we can say that the vaccine has purely become a political commodity. Despite the challenges, we are trying to procure vaccines from all potential sources.

transfer knowledge, technology, research findings among others for effective treatment and service delivery. We have set up a unified health system as well as expedited the expansion of health facilities across the country. The new wave of coronavirus is emerging from different variants of coronavirus in different parts of the globe and we are not in a risk-free zone. We must be well equipped because we don't have any proven technology for the treatment of Covid patients. Indeed, vaccine is an important solution but still it is not the final solution. We are moving ahead to provide available solutions to our people and this is an important step towards the Covid 19 response from the government.

What is the government leadership and your ministry doing to ensure vaccines for all Nepalis?

We are in correspondence with the governments of vaccine manufacturing countries on multiple level. We have succeeded in few cases like China has recently announced to donate one million Vero Cell jabs, the United States also made a commitment recently. It is difficult to manage the required doses but it is not impossible. We are in correspondence with India, China, United Kingdom, Russia and the United States. The President and Prime Minister are in talks with their counterparts and I am also in correspondence with my counterpart health ministers of vaccine manufacturing countries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also facilitating to seal the vaccine deal, however two major reasons: higher demand than production and storage of vaccines are hindering the equitable distribution of vaccine. We are lucky to have initiated and immunised what we were able to do, more than five dozen countries have not even received a single jab so far in South Asia. One of the major reasons that hinders

immunisation campaigns is lack of supply from COVAX as promised. COVAX, vaccine pool established from the donation of advanced nations to ensure equitable distribution of vaccines, has promised to provide 14.8 million jabs which makes up 20% of the population eligible for vaccine. However, manufacturers supposed to supply vaccines for COVAX were unable to dispatch as promised. So far Nepal has received the first consignment of 348,000 jabs under the COVAX facility.

At the onset when I had assumed office, I had said that the vaccine is not only a medical tool, it is also a commercial commodity as well as political commodity. Analysing the ongoing vaccine diplomacy, we can say that the vaccine has purely become a political commodity. Despite the challenges, we are trying to procure vaccines from all potential sources.

The Indian government had extended a million doses of Covishield in donation and Government of Nepal had sealed a deal to procure another two million doses and you have gone on record to say that procurement process for another five million doses from the same source, Serum Institute of India is taking place. Why are we relying on single source to procure the vaccines when it is clear that a single source cannot supply sufficient vaccines as per our requirement in the current time?

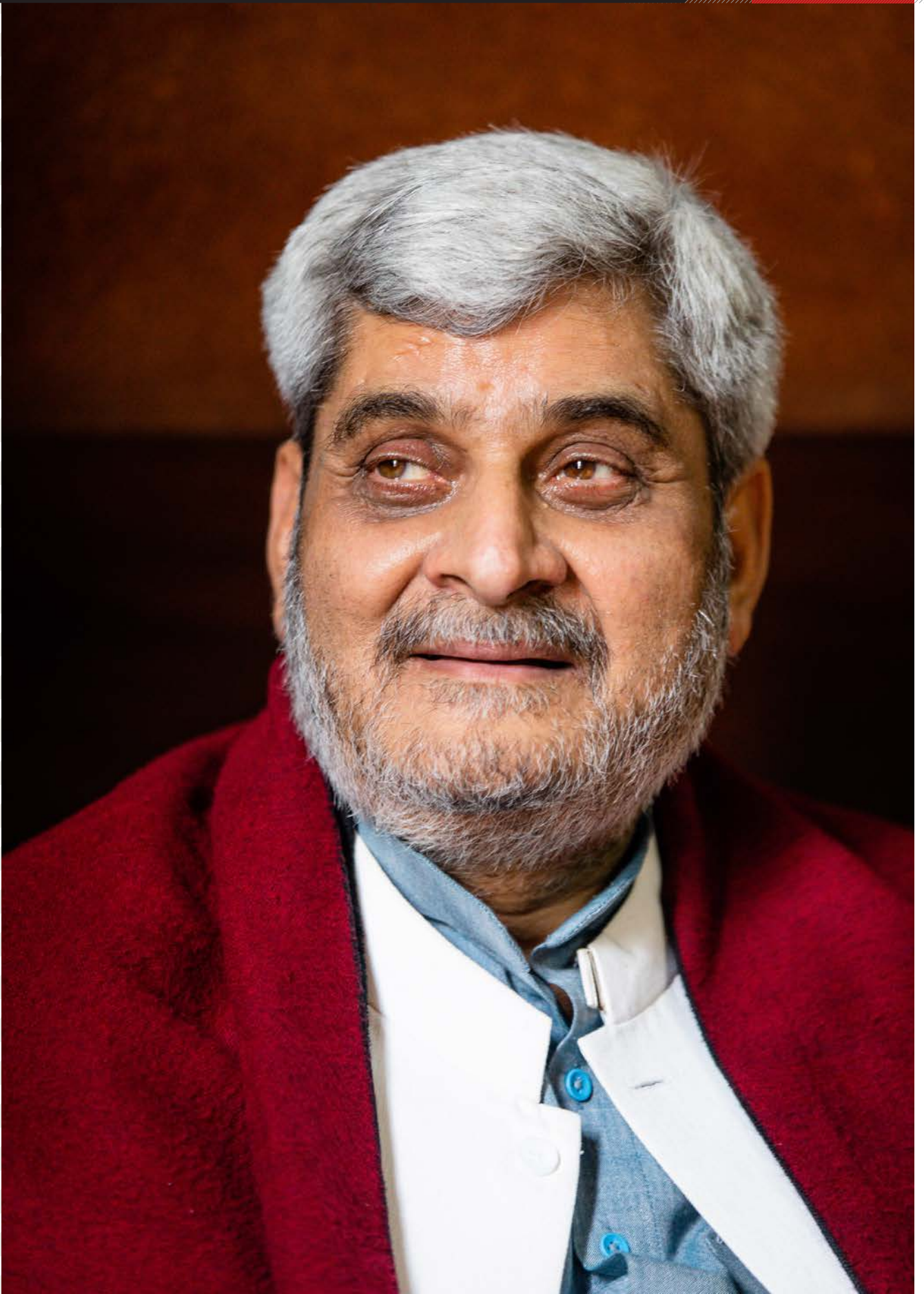
It is not true that we were relying on a single source. We are in correspondence with all manufacturers asking for the quantity they can supply, the rates and potential delivery dates. Some are yet to respond; some were not interested to disclose price. We've started process to procure from those who have expressed interest to supply vaccine that is viable for us provided the circumstances like maintaining temperature while transportation to the vaccine centres across the country meets our requirements.

Johnson and Johnson has received approval from World Health Organisation, Pfizer has also developed a vaccine that doesn't require the cold chain. Besides Johnson and Johnson vaccine is a single dose-shot. Do you have plans to procure vaccines like Johnson and Johnson?

We are trying to procure Johnson and Johnson vaccines as well and seeking support from the US government for facilitation. We had also discussed with the Ambassador of the United States to Nepal for needful facilitation. We have dispatched a letter to Johnson and Johnson requesting to supply five million doses. We had also approached Moderna to supply vaccines to Nepal but the company has said that it can give us vaccines only in 2022. Other companies have asked us to correspond through their SAARC/local representative and we are in touch with them.

It is evident that Nepal is reeling under procedural issues of procurement. What sort of procurement process are you following?

The government has procured directly from manufacturer till now and only the Serum Institute of India has supplied vaccines to us. We don't have confusion in the procurement process, it is either government to government (G2G) or government to manufacturer. Apart from that, the cabinet has allowed any private party to procure vaccines from the government of the manufacturing country or from manufacturers directly and they are allowed to add only 10% profit margin to their cost. However, Nepal government will not procure from the private sector like the government did in medical equipment. If private parties are able to bring vaccines utilising their networks, they are themselves responsible for distribution and sales.





There was mismanagement in the past. The ministry has dispatched the hazard allowance to the concerned hospitals. Distribution of hazard allowances was carried out by the management of the hospital. The management of hospital had distributed hazard allowance in socialistic principal to entire health workers rather than being focused on front liners. We have corrected this through inbuilt system to ensure only those exposed to hazard or front liners will receive the hazard allowances.

Why do you think the private sector could not do it then?

Private sector players were claiming that the government is creating obstruction for smooth supply before the approval was issued. Though it is more than two months, not even a single party has provided justifiable basis that they will be able to supply vaccines.

The Ministry of Finance has said that there is committed resource worth Rs 48 billion last December to procure vaccines, and it has signaled inefficiency of MoHP to procure vaccines. How do you explain this?

That is true that they have ensured resources for vaccine procurement as allowed by our budgetary system. The World Bank Group and Asian Development Bank have promised to provide support for vaccination, and based on their commitment the Ministry of Finance has ensured the resources. However, the current challenge is less to do with funds and more to do with availability and readiness of the manufacturer country's government to supply vaccines. The resources allocated by the Ministry of Finance is the taxpayers' money and must be utilised efficiently. Considering the sensitivity of the issue, I am reiterating my stance that I will not sign on procurement related files that do not follow the procurement rules and established norms.

China has donated a million Vero Cell doses as a goodwill gesture. Do you plan to procure vaccines from China?

We've decided to distribute those jabs to 60 to 64 years age group across the country. Similarly, we will distribute China-aided jabs to our population living in the northern belt bordering with China (Tibet). The reason behind distributing doses to the northern belt population is because they've socio-cultural and economic relations with China. They've trade relations with China, and we've allocated

100,000 jabs to inoculate 50,000 population of Nepal's northern belt.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has initiated talks with Chinese authorities through Nepali ambassador of China and they have in principal agreed to supply. Following that, the Department of Health Services (DoHS), under our ministry sealed the 'non-disclosure deal' with the concerned agency. Non-disclosure agreement is a confidential agreement that can't be disclosed with a third party regarding rate, quantity and delivery time. To materialise the procurement, the DoHS has asked them about the quantity they can supply, tentative time period for delivery, and rate and we've yet to get a response.

About the expansion of health facilities, why is the government restricted?

We have tried to develop 500 bed covid hospital at the newly constructed building of Bir Hospital and brought necessary equipment too. Following the issuance of Ordinance for Covid 19 Crisis Management 2078, we have envisioned to develop Bir Hospital as a Unified Command Hospital. The Ministry of Health and Population has appointed Dr. Jageshwar Gautam as the head of the Unified Command Hospital. He will look after the entire treatment system of the hospital except its medical education. The central command of Bir Hospital can bring regional hospitals into its network. Recently, 50 additional beds for Covid 19 patients came into operation in the new building of Bir Hospital and we've plans to expand it up to 500 beds in the immediate future. We are paying our full attention to expand health facilities as there are projections that third wave might affect us in October and November.

Experts have said that the third wave could affect children as the first one had affected the senior population and the second hit the youth, which is why we are preparing for ICUs/ ventilators for the treatment of young age population. We are expanding facilities nationwide. New oxygen plants are being added as inbuilt system on hospital premises. We've policy to keep liquid oxygen tank at 200 bed hospitals. We've adopted this policy measure for a smooth and reliable supply of oxygen in an uniform manner and it doesn't require oxygen cylinders. Oxygen plants are added at TU Teaching Hospital, Bheri Zonal Hospital and Nepalgunj Medical College. Similarly, in Dharan, Bharatpur and other hospitals, we are going to install oxygen plants immediately. We have approved plans to expand 2,000 HDUs (high dependency units), 500 ventilators. We are receiving ventilators from our friendly nations as donation and we'll also procure if that is insufficient. We will disclose whitepaper regarding the government expenses for the treatment of Covid 19 and procurement of medical equipment.

PCR testing facility is not available in remote villages; your comments.

We have dispatched 1.2 million antigen detection rapid diagnostic test (Ag-RDT) kits to seven provinces. Provincial governments have handed over to districts and local level. The major reason behind this is to isolate infected people from the community. We've received these Ag-RDT kits as donations from our friendly nations. We are ready to procure if that becomes insufficient. Antigen test is must for screening infected and non-infected. We will carry out PCR test among those found infected during antigen test to prevent massive transmission in communities.





What are the plans to cope with community transmissions?

Only way to effectively execute prevention measures are to strictly abide with health safety protocols and it is fundamental to control the pandemic. We have failed to abide with health safety protocols in a strict manner. The MoHP has repeatedly requested since the beginning to resort to online classes, stop celebrating functions, gatherings and seminars. But no one listens and the consequences are in front of us.

What are you doing to crackdown on the ill practice of rampant black-marketing of life saving medical equipment including oxygen concentrators and cylinders, as well as attacks on health workers?

It is a painful incident that happened at Bheri Zonal Hospital and we condemn it. Attack against health workers will be punished under the due process of law. Recently the President issued an Ords Act 201, which has harsh punishment measures for those vandalising health organisations and attacking health workers. Those vandalising health institutions will be jailed for 2 to 5 years or pay penalty worth Rs 2 lakhs to Rs 5 lakhs or both jail and penalty can be enforced. If anyone attacks health workers and hurts them, s/he will have to undergo three years in jail or pay Rs 3 lakhs in penalty or both. Those accused for attacking the health workers in Bheri Hospital are facing court case. The culprits of black-marketing of cylinders will be penalised after proper investigation based on grievances. Simultaneously, during the period when we had witnessed short supply of cylinders, the government had also intervened in the market through managing efficient distribution to the hospitals and we've also dispatched donated cylinders across the country to avoid black marketeering. Concerned agencies are monitoring the market to

crackdown on ill practices in supply of medical goods. Oxygen supply is restored in a smooth manner. We have also extended permission to setup liquid oxygen industry on a large scale. If everything goes well, the government might provide subsidies on electricity used to operate liquid oxygen plant as moderate size plant consumes nearly 5MW electricity. If everything goes as per plan, we will have additional 60 tons capacity liquid oxygen plant from the private sector by coming November.

You have committed to a white paper on Covid 19 response. Can you also explain the dilemma regarding free treatment facilities to Covid 19 patients?

The government has signed agreement with hospitals and these hospitals have to submit the details of covid patients. They will get Rs 3,500 per day for mild cases, Rs 7,000 for moderately critical and Rs 15,000 for patients getting treatment in ICU. We are reimbursing the claims cautiously through cross-verification to ensure that hospitals have not also charged the patients. We are doing cross-verification from patients and their caretakers. Those hospitals charging patients directly themselves are not coming to sign the agreement with MoHP. Concerned agencies have taken action against the hospitals when the inspection found them charging Rs 2,000 per hour for oxygen.

The government has been distributing 70 types of life-saving drugs for free and bearing the cost of the treatment of catastrophic diseases such as cancer, heart, kidney, head injury, sickle cell anemia and spinal injury. How sustainable is this? And what are your plans to strengthen the health system?

Covid 19 will be controlled within few years as it is a global challenge and the entire world is putting effort

to control the pandemic. It has created pressure on our health system, it has also dragged our attention to the fragility of our health system and we will definitely strengthen it. Rather than talking big and working less, I am focused on not letting the health system erode further.

The critically ill patients of aforementioned disease will get continuous support as well as life saving drugs. This is the duty of the state to ensure affordable and accessible quality healthcare to our population. In the past, only the influential would benefit from the resources allocated to the deprived and critically ill patients. Gradually, we have reformed and minimum support is extended by the state for those suffering from these life threatening diseases. We also have to manage available human resources. As a minister, I will always work to boost the morale of our health workers.

Why was the hazard allowance not channelised properly for front line health workers?

There was mismanagement in the past. The ministry has dispatched the hazard allowance to the concerned hospitals. Distribution of hazard allowances was carried out by the management of the hospital. The management of hospital had distributed hazard allowance in socialistic principal to entire health workers rather than being focused on front liners. We have corrected this through inbuilt system to ensure only those exposed to hazard or front liners will receive the hazard allowances. **B**



We have also extended permission to setup liquid oxygen industry on a large scale. If everything goes well, the government might provide subsidies on electricity used to operate liquid oxygen plant as moderate size plant consumes nearly 5MW electricity. If everything goes as per plan, we will have additional 60 tons capacity liquid oxygen plant from the private sector by coming November.

A LOOK AT what's inside the NATIONAL BUDGET



The government unveiled the fiscal budget 2021-22 through the Ordinance following the dissolution of the parliament on May 22, despite serious objection from opposition political parties, civil society and legal experts which cited lack of financial accountability

and probabilities of fiduciary risks in the absence of parliament.

The government unveiled the fiscal budget 45 days ahead of the closure of fiscal year calendar violating the provision of the Constitution section 114 which clearly states, 'If at any time, except when both the Houses of the

Federal Parliament is in session, the President is satisfied that circumstances exist which render it necessary to take action, the President may issue an Ordinance on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers.'

As per legal experts, there is no valid reason for unveiling the budget 45 days ahead of

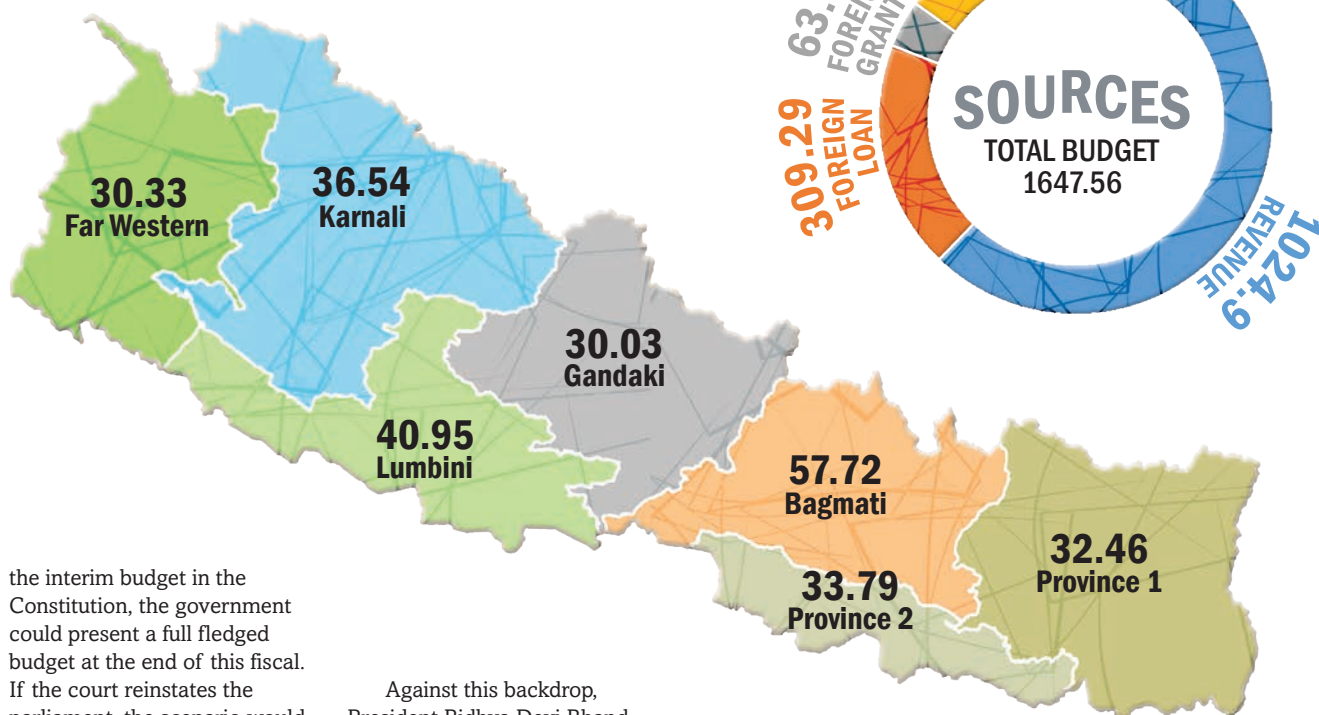
time when the parliament is not in session, and which is seen as a violation of section 114 of the Constitution.

Bipin Adhikari, a constitutional law expert says, "The Constitution has envisioned that the budget for the next fiscal is presented 45 days ahead so that there is sufficient time for parliamentarians to discuss it and endorse it prior to the beginning of the fiscal year. Our constitution has envisioned that the fiscal budget be presented only in the joint session of the parliament; house of representatives and national assembly."

In the mean time, the Supreme Court has challenged the government's decision of dissolution of parliament. The government was required to wait for the court's verdict because it had sufficient time of 45 days to resort to the Ordinance Budget, according to former Finance Secretary Rameshore Prasad Khanal, "As there is no provision for

Provincial Budget

FY 2021-22 (Rs in bn)



the interim budget in the Constitution, the government could present a full fledged budget at the end of this fiscal. If the court reinstates the parliament, the scenario would be different and the budget can be brought abiding regular parliamentary processes.”

On May 21, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli led Cabinet has recommended the dissolution of the parliament for the second time despite the court having reinstated the parliament in February following the hearing on writ petition filed against the unconstitutional dissolution of December 20 last year.

Against this backdrop, President Bidhya Devi Bhandari issued Ordinances - Appropriation Ordinance, Finance Ordinance, Loan and Guarantee Ordinance and Ordinance to Raise Domestic Debt on May 29. And Finance Minister Bishnu Prasad Paudel presented the budget at the Prime Ministers Office in the absence of the parliament.

Budget 2021-22: A glimpse

Finance Minister Paudel presented a budget of Rs 1647.57 billion for the next fiscal focusing on prioritising saving of lives of people during the coronavirus pandemic. In recent days, thousands of people lost their lives, rate of hospitalisation skyrocketed, and there was rampant spread of the virus amidst shortages of medical supplies, oxygen and an overstretched manpower.

The government has allocated Rs 122.77 billion or 7.5% of the total budget for the health sector and Rs 26.75 billion from the health budget is earmarked for purchasing vaccines against Covid 19.

The fiscal budget has earmarked sufficient budget for the Prime Minister Employment

Program (PMEP) at Rs 12 billion to create 200,000 jobs in the fiscal 2021-22. Budget allocation for PMEP increased substantially over the years from Rs 3.10 billion of fiscal 2018-19 to Rs 5.01 in fiscal 2019-20. In the ongoing fiscal, the government has earmarked Rs 11.60 billion for this program. The government has increased allocation by four times without any substantial achievement from this project. Economist Biswo Poudel opined that such employment scheme programs should enhance skillsets of human resource. “When the government is going to pour billions into job creation, it should also create assets for the country like infrastructure, production and others,” Poudel iterated, “Simultaneously, those connected with this employment scheme in a particular fiscal year must be enabled to find jobs in the market, and no longer be relying on this program in the next year.”

The fiscal budget has not

announced substantial relief focusing on the revival of the economic recovery, it has announced to give continuity of the initiations of ongoing fiscal 2020-21.

Major allocation for fiscal budget 2021-22:

- Social Security Allowance: Rs 127.78 bn
- Salary and perks of civil servants: Rs 101.08 bn
- Pension and gratuity: Rs 89.14 bn
- Continuation of business (affected by covid19) fund: Rs 50 bn
- Reconstruction: Rs 33.55 bn
- Irrigation and river training: Rs 31.86 bn
- Vaccination against Covid-19: Rs 26.75 bn
- University grant: Rs 18.34 bn
- East-west highway expansion: Rs 15.34 bn
- Subsidised credit (5% interest waiver): Rs 13 bn
- Prime Minister Employment Program: Rs 12 bn
- Subsidy for chemical fertilizer: 12 bn

The fiscal budget has not announced substantial relief focusing on the revival of the economic recovery, it has announced to give continuity of the initiations of ongoing fiscal 2020-21.

- President Education Improvement Program: Rs 10 bn

Priorities of the fiscal budget 2021-22

- Control of Covid 19 and strengthening of the health sector
- Relief and subsidies
- Employment generation
- Social security and protection
- Boosting agriculture productivity and food security
- Education infrastructure development
- Industrialisation and infrastructure development
- Coordination and collaboration with subnational governments
- Equitable development and reinforce resilience in economy
- Promoting good governance

Social Security Allowance: A distributive approach

The government has increased social security allowance by 33% or Rs 1000 from next fiscal. The government has been providing social security allowance to senior citizens, widows, disabled and marginalised indigenous peoples; the total beneficiary under this scheme is more than 2.2 million, according to the Ministry of Finance.

The approach to raise social security allowance by the care taker government which has already announced general elections in November this year raises eyebrows as opposition political parties have slammed it as ill intention of the government to woo votes. "The government is simply unaccountable and autocratic in nature," said Gagan Thapa,

former Health Minister and leader of Nepali Congress, "We cannot accept this budget entered from the backdoor dissolving the parliament through unconstitutional way."

Thapa said that the ill practices of the incumbent government has posed risk that every government announce populist budget through ordinance in the year of election dissolving the parliament. "The fundamentals and way to present budget is unconstitutional, we will not accept this," he stressed.

Former Justice of the Supreme Court, Bala Ram KC has said that it is only the parliament that allows the government to spend from the government treasury with the commitment to execute policies and programs of the government announced by the President at the parliament.

"There are two major rules, first the Prime Minister requests the President to announce policies and programs at the parliament that is commitment of the government to execute the announced policies and programs and the Prime Minister then sends the Finance Minister to seek approval of parliamentarians to allocate resources, raise debt/ collect taxes to execute the commitments announced in the parliament," said KC, "Without parliamentary approval, the government has no right to raise debt, tax and spend from state treasury. The care taker government should consult with the opposition to present vote on account when the election is going to happen in the near term."

The government has also violated the Financial Procedure Act, which clearly says the Finance Minister has to present the principal and priorities of the budget at the parliament 15 days ahead of the budget presentation.

The main opposition Nepali Congress has termed the budget as 'Hail Mary Budget' as it seems like a desperate attempt to score late in the game of elections, violating the accountability towards public finance which has increased fiduciary risks.

Announcement of tunnel road projects

The fiscal budget has given due priority to the development of tunnel road projects considering the efficiency of travel and transportation of goods. The country has only one tunnel road, Nagdhunga-Naubise section of Prithvi Highway which is under construction. The fiscal budget 2021-22 has envisaged to take forward dozens of tunnel road projects to shorten travel time and cost while travelling and transporting goods through roads constructed on difficult terrains in the hills and mountain regions. The government has earmarked

Major revisions in excise duty

Product	Existing in FY 2020-21 (in Rs per unit)	Revised for FY 2021-22
Non alcoholic beverage (per liter)	17	20
Energy drinks	30	36
Beer	165	198
Wine	370	444
Wine (above 17% alcohol)	430	516
Local (homemade) alcohol	35	43
Spirit (above 80% alcohol)	60	70
Extra natural alcohol	65	76
Spirit used in wine and brandy	165	198
15 UP readymade alcohol	1325	1592
25 UP readymade alcohol	990	1188
30 UP readymade alcohol	920	1105
Tobacco (Per kg)	95	118
Processed tobacco	275	343
Cigars (per unit)	17	21
Non-filter cigarette (per 1000 units)	495	618
Filter cigarette (per 1000 units) 70/75 and 85 mm	1335/ 1475 and 2715	1418/ 1843 and 3393
Bidi (per 1000 units)	90	94
Tamakhu (per kg)	1335	1668
Pan masala (per kg)	650	812
Betelnuts without tobacco (per kg)	225	281
Jaggery (per kg)	125	138
Liquid jaggery (per kg)	80	96

Source: Ordinance to Amend Finance Act 2021-22

budget for the construction of Siddhababa-Dobhan of Siddhartha Highway; Lamabagar-Lapche section of Dolakha; Dharan-Leuti section of Dharan-Dhankuta road from 2021-22. Likewise, Rs 1.8 billion is allocated to construct the tunnel road at Tinkune-Jadibuti section of Araniko Highway to manage traffic congestion.

The government has also announced to commence construction of few other tunnel projects in the next fiscal along with completion of their detailed project reports. Tokha-Chhahare-Gurjubhanjyang tunnel road project that connects Nepal's capital with northern neighbour via Rasuwagadhi will commence its construction in 2021-22. Khurkot-Chiyabari section (Sindhuli) of BP highway, Thankot-Chitlang are expected to begin construction works along with completion of DPR.

The fiscal budget has also announced some other tunnel projects to initiate feasibility study and DPR in next fiscal namely Majhimtar-Shaktikhor section of Prithvi Highway; Hemja-Nayapul section of Pokhara-Baglung Highway; Dumling-Bangsing section of Chepang Highway; Dumkibas-Bardaghat section of East-West Highway; Babai-Chhinchu

section of Kohalpur-Surkhet Highway; Kapase-Siyakot section of Surkhet-Dailekh road; Pravas-Jorthe section of Palpa-Tamghas road and BP nagar-Khutiya-Dipayal.

Industrialisation and startups

Attention has been given to startups; the fiscal budget has announced up to Rs 2.5 million loan against project collateral to promote startups. The government has waived registration and renewal fees for startups and announced to provide single window services to them. Similarly, flexible legal approach will be taken to attract foreign direct investment in startups, according to the budget. The government has earmarked Rs one billion to setup a 'challenge fund'. The fiscal budget has owned 'Made in Nepal' and 'Make in Nepal' campaigns

initiated by the private sector that envisages using local raw materials as well as local labour. Adequate resources are allocated for the development of industrial estates, industrial villages and Special Economic Zones. The fiscal budget has announced to become self-reliant in production of cement, pharmaceuticals, iron rods, furniture and foot ware.

Viability gap funding

The fiscal budget 2021-22 initiates viability gap funding to encourage public-private partnership in execution of infrastructure projects. The government will provide up to 30% of viability gap as cash grant to promote the private sector for the development and operation of infrastructure projects such as roads, energy, rail projects, airports among others.

Promoting a resilient economy

With the onslaught of shocks to the economy due to unforeseen circumstances, the fiscal budget has been envisaged to develop a resilient economy that seeks to minimise the impact of disaster and simultaneously promote green growth. In recent years, human activities related to encroachment of nature have caused natural disasters and negative environmental impact. In addition, instability in global financial markets, earthquakes and the current pandemic has harshly affected efforts of human development as well as infrastructure development. Against this backdrop, the country is compelled to adopt green growth measures mitigating climate change impacts, promote circular economy towards achieving its long-term goal to be an

Sources (Rs in bn)

Title	Source
Revenue	1024.9
Foreign loan	309.29
Foreign grants	63.37
Domestic debt	250
Total budget	1647.56

Allocation (Rs in bn)

Title	Allocation	Percentage
Recurrent Expenditure	678.61	41.2
Capital Expenditure	374.26	22.7
Financing	207.97	12.6
Fiscal transfer to sub national governments	386.71	23.5

Fiscal transfer to sub national governments (Rs in bn)

Grants heading	Province	Local govt.	Total transfer
Equilization	57.95	94.56	152.51
Conditional	35.87	173.5	209.37
Matching/Complementary			12.37
Special			12.46
Revenue Sharing			126.69

Provincial Budget (Rs in bn)

	FY 2018/19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22
Province 1	35.94	42.2	40.89	32.46
Province 2	29.78	38.72	33.56	33.79
Bagmati Province	35.61	47.6	51.42	57.72
Gandaki Province	24	32.13	34.84	30.03
Lumbini Province	28.09	36.41	36.35	40.95
Karnali Province	28.28	34.35	33.74	36.54
Far western Province	25.06	28.16	33.38	30.33

The main opposition Nepali Congress has termed the budget as 'Hail Mary Budget' as it seems like a desperate attempt to score late in the game of elections, violating the accountability towards public finance which has increased fiduciary risks.

Experts say that 'waiver and given revenue collection target are mutually exclusive; either the government can enforce waiver or increase revenue collection without providing such waivers'.

inclusive and self-reliant economy, encourage green-infrastructures to attain the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Allocation and resource management

Critics are claiming that the resource management for the inflated budget will be challenging. Among the manifold challenges in the economy, shrinking revenue will continue to affect public spending. Another major contradiction witnessed in the fiscal budget 2021-22 is the announcement of waiver in fees and charges although the government aims to collect Rs 1,151 billion in revenue. From the total revenue collection target Rs 126 billion will be transferred to subnational governments from the divisible fund and the rest will be collected in the federal government's coffer. Experts say that 'waiver and given revenue collection target are mutually exclusive; either the government can enforce waiver or increase revenue collection without providing such waivers'.

The government aims to mobilise Rs 250 billion as domestic debt, Rs 309 billion from foreign debt and Rs 63.37 billion from foreign grants. Plan of mobilising huge debt without efficiency in execution of projects could be deadly and lead to debt trap as the country has enormously raise

its debt liability in recent years. Country's outstanding debt till 2020-21 is expected to hover at Rs 1.59 trillion or 37.3% of the country's GDP.

Key targets

The fiscal budget 2021-22 has aimed to achieve 6.5% growth with revival of economic activities shattered by the more than year-long pandemic. The country witnessed 1.99% negative growth in fiscal 2019-20 and the projections of growth in fiscal 2020-21 also paints a gloomy picture of stagnating growth. The government anticipates that economic activities will gather pace following massive inoculation campaigns to control the pandemic targeted in the next fiscal.

The fiscal budget targets taming inflation within 6.5% in fiscal 2021-22; Nepal Rastra Bank—the central regulatory and monetary authority—will come up with necessary regulatory provisions to contain inflation within the given 'tight spot'.

Changes in tax/revenue provisions

The fiscal budget has extended waiver and incentives in a bid to revive economic activities. It has promised to continue refinancing schemes, subsidised credit through business continuation funds to support severely affected sectors. As the budget is issued through an ordinance, it has not made major revisions in taxes.

The fiscal budget 2021-22 has extended offer to waive 90% income tax for tax payers having annual transactions up to Rs two million, 75% waiver is granted for taxpayers having annual transaction size from Rs 2 to 5 million and 50% waiver to those taxpayers having annual transaction of Rs 5 to 10 million.

Severely affected businesses like hotels, travel & trekking, transportation, aviation, cinema industry and media houses can transfer their losses for 10 years and plan their losses accordingly,

they will be able to enjoy hefty income tax waiver as fiscal budget provisions only 1% income tax for them. Private companies and firms can enjoy tax and penalty exemption if they submit tax details till fiscal 2018-19 and 10% of accrued fees and penalty by the first quarter of fiscal 2021-22.

Cases filed in Inland Revenue Department for administrative review and also in Revenue Tribunal and Courts for judicial review except forged and fake VAT bills related cases can enjoy 50% waiver in interest accrued in tax amount slapped by the respective tax authority if taxpayer withdraw petition and file tax with 50% per cent interest accrued within first five months of upcoming fiscal.

CSR amount contributed for Covid 19 prevention, control and treatment funds as well as such amount extended to Covid hospitals can be deducted while calculating taxable amount. Likewise, 25% waiver is extended in taxable amount for those receiving pensions. Oxygen plant installation and production of related products are offered customs, VAT and excise exemption till first half of fiscal 2021-22.

Similarly, the fiscal budget announced to lessen the lease amount to set up industries in special economic zones (SEZs). It has offered land without lease charge/fees for the assembling and production of electric vehicles in Nepal and announced to provide tax incentives as well.

Major tax revisions are witnessed in electric home appliances and electric vehicles. Excise slapped by former Finance Minister Yubraj Khatriwada on electric vehicles and electric home appliances are scrapped from the fiscal budget 2021-22. Only 1% customs duty is levied for induction heaters to encourage households towards electricity consumption.

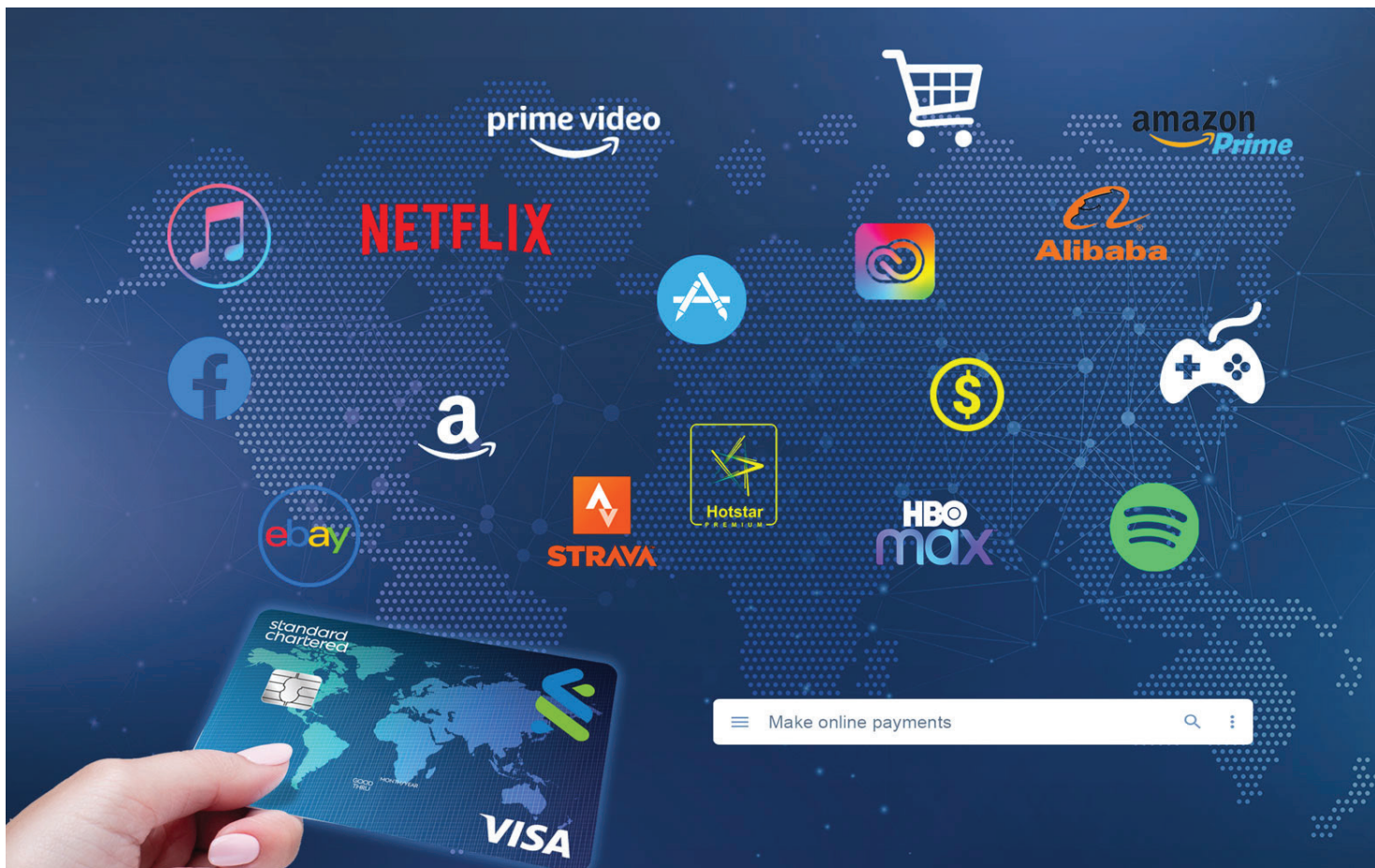
Customs duty of electric appliances on everyday household electric utilities

has been slashed from 15% to 10%. Likewise, custom duty on dishwashers and washing machines has been trimmed from 30% to 20%. The fiscal budget announced levying only 15% customs duty on refrigerators and freezers instead of the prevailing 20%.

The fiscal budget has increased customs duty on cocoa powder and chocolates from 30 to 40%, and doubled customs duty on panels and concrete used in prefabricated buildings to 20% on panels and 30% on concrete respectively. The fiscal budget has also raised 2.5 percentage points capital gain tax (CGT) for individual investors if they sell securities in short span of less than a year. Those holding securities for a year are allowed to file only 5% as CGT. However, those who sell within a year have to submit 7.5% as CGT.

Private sector lauds the budget

The private sector has hailed the budget as it has envisaged to revive the economy hit hard by the pandemic encouraging private investment through incentives and facilities. "The budget has incorporated the feedbacks of the private sector and also motivates private sector investment in a bid to enhance productivity and create jobs", said Shekhar Golchha, President of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), "Proper execution of the budget will be able to deliver results. The waivers and incentives offered by the government will stimulate private sector activities," he added. Further, Golchha appreciated the government's policy to support startups and lure private sector in infrastructure development through viability gap funding for public-private partnership projects. **B**



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MSME STRUGGLE TO BREATHE IN THE COVID 19 CRISIS

Two thirds of the global population is employed by MSMEs. In Nepal there are 31 lakh MSMEs registered with an additional 67.5% operating in the informal sector employing 17.5 lakh people. Today, MSME's are the hardest hit by the Covid 19 crisis. What can the MSME entrepreneur do to survive and recover from this crisis in the immediate time? In this edition of Business 360, three personalities share their opinion on what the MSME entrepreneur could /should do in the current economic crisis brought on by the pandemic that threatens their existence?

Amun Thapa

Fouder & CEO, Sastodeal

Crisis presents an opportunity for MSMEs to catch-up with the fast paced business world dominated by big business houses. It is also a chance for entrepreneurs to take a step back and look at things from a holistic perspective. Entrepreneurs can choose to follow either of these 4-action steps to survive and thrive the pandemic:

1. Collaborate – Instead of trying to do everything on their own, MSMEs can collaborate with each other in the ecosystem by partnering on key strategic fronts to save resources – time and money and to excel in business during and post pandemic. For example, a home-stay business in Helambu can partner with

e-commerce startup in Pokhara on a revenue-sharing model that benefits both parties.

2. Pivot – Easier said than done but if the business is struggling to make ends' meet during the pandemic and the post-pandemic situation does not look better either, it is best to pivot partially or completely to a new business model. For example, a restaurant with 50+ table with an average of 200 diners a day, might find it difficult to fill those tables post pandemic. Instead of closing down, it can leave the rental space and operate in a "cloud-kitchen," lean model with delivery only option and manage to cater to 200+ diners a day.



After every major crisis comes a period of immense growth and opportunities. It's a simple business cycle – recession is followed by expansion and the cycle repeats. Post-pandemic, billions of people will be looking to change habits, millions of people will be looking for jobs, thousands of new businesses and ideas will emerge. Where will you be in all of these?

3. Wait – Like time heals everything, it will heal your business and industry too. If you have the patience to wait at least 6-12 months, save up your resources, use the time to learn new skills in the domain, and resume once the sky is clear.

4. Gamble – If business history tells us one thing – it is that companies that have made fortunes today are the ones who have doubled-down in crisis where others have backed out. If you are even 50% confident that crisis is temporary and things will go back to normal anytime soon,

then this is your time to take risks, invest in growth drivers and when things go back to normal, be aggressive enough to seize the opportunities.

After every major crisis comes a period of immense growth and opportunities. It's a simple business cycle – recession is followed by expansion and the cycle repeats. Post-pandemic, billions of people will be looking to change habits, millions of people will be looking for jobs, thousands of new businesses and ideas will emerge. Where will you be in all of these?

Niraj Khanal

CEO, Antarprerana



Globally, Covid 19 has created multiple challenges and issues in every person's life. Businesses are largely affected hence people are too with closure of businesses and loss of jobs. The pandemic has especially affected Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) acutely. Personally, I have been observing entrepreneurs giving up hope of survival and feeling very vulnerable and depressive.

Nobody had ever imagined such uncertainty and sought solutions, let alone be prepared for the kind of resilience required. The only thing in the current time is the hope that this time shall pass soon. We can only stay positive and explore solutions.

In my opinion, there are three things that entrepreneurs can do in this point of time. Adapt with the situation, adjust to the new normal - give innovation to your product, services and procedures - and thereby find ways to give continuity to your business.

Adaption

Try to stay positive, entertain yourself, concentrate on work that you enjoy the most, do physical and mental exercises, eat healthy and pursue your hobbies. Importantly make your family to do the same. Keep yourself busy and occupied. Remember if you and your family are not fit, your business will not be fit. I have observed that when the owner of the company is unwell, the business is bound to slow down or sometimes come to complete stop as most of the Nepali companies are owner driven rather than system

driven.

Do not spend too much time on social media. Do not over-think your business. Do not spend time on issues and matters that you cannot control like talking about politics. Rather invest in increasing your knowledge and skills, eg: join webinars.

Focus on team: Spend time with your partners and team online. Talk with them on a frequent basis to ask about their wellbeing and stay engaged. Support them. Your priority rather than focusing on social work, should be to rescue your people before rescuing others. Working from home in the context of our social culture is not that easy. Provide flexible working hours. Eliminate unnecessary online meetings. Empathise with your team members, you need them the most.

Reach out to customers through digital mediums even though you are not serving them right now. Make yourself visible be through social media platforms. Stay connected!

Innovation

Revisit your vision, goals and targets. Remember, while starting your business you probably had thought that you know everything there is to know about your business ideas and that eventually you would make huge profits, which for most of us didn't happen. Now that you have the time to reflect, you will probably have realised that you were not as prepared. But at this point of time we must learn and evolve from the many mistakes we have made, the changes in government policies, our



Own the solution as much as you own the problem. Find a good mentor who can guide you. But remember you are on your own. You need to harness your skills and resources as best possible yourself.

experience coming through natural disasters and calamities.

This is the time for introspection: to try to find answers to the purpose of your life. Try to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses. Make a list of lessons: your failures and best practices. Based on your 'WHY' i.e., your purpose of life, your individual strengths, the needs of your customer, define your new value proposition and set new goals and strategies with innovation. Iterate your product, services and processes. Let go of methods that were not working too well. The channels you were using to reach your customers might not be working as well as you think, innovate and collaborate to increase your outreach. Think digital. Modify your work culture and systems.

Business continuity

Go for the lean approach again. Do a lot of experimentation to give the best solution to your customers. You may fail initially but remember to "fail fast, fail cheap, fail often" - yet to be determined to continue your business.

Steve Blank once said "Get out of the building" - it is not literally out of the building, it's about getting your hands dirty!

Don't expect others to help you. Help yourself, try to solve your problems. Own the solution as much as you own the problem. Find a good mentor who can guide you. But remember you are on your own. You need to harness your skills and resources as best possible yourself.

Narottam Aryal

President, King's College



That the Covid 19 pandemic has affected the entrepreneurial ecosystem of Nepal would be an understatement to its real impact on micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, their value chain, and their business models. Since 2015 enterprises in Nepal have faced serious external crises like the Gorkha earthquake, economic blockade, other natural disasters, and two lengthy periods of lockdown. While many entrepreneurs have shut their businesses, the ones that are surviving are thin stretched in terms of resources as rainy day funds required to keep their businesses afloat has become a luxury for MSME. Under these circumstances, MSMEs should prioritise two strategic directions: surviving today and thriving tomorrow.

Surviving Today - The Reactive Mode: First and foremost, take care of your team. Your team is the most important asset in your organisation. Coming together and showing compassion is the first step towards beating this crisis. Check-in with them regularly, try to empathise with the hardships they are going through in their personal life and create mechanisms to bring the human side of the organisation alive including activities like happy hour, and check-in sessions to see how team members are doing mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Retaining your key team members is challenging at this time. They might be working more because they love their work and their company. Due to the ongoing crisis, you might

not be able to pay them their entire salary. It is important for you to revisit your costs and prioritise salary payments. If you are still not able to pay salaries, communicate it clearly with your staff. Let them know that the company will take care of the deficits when it bounces back. That commitment would be important. It is helpful if you can set up an employee team to seek solutions to these challenges.

Communicate with your other important stakeholders like customers, investors, bankers transparently. They know that the world is on a life-saving mode right now. Hiding it from them would only distance potential help while allowing rumors to spread. Set up mechanisms to communicate with those stakeholders constantly and update them about developments.

Revisit your budgets and take necessary measures to cut costs. Crises like pandemic and recessions are not for business development. Reassessing the need for every line item in your budget should help you free up additional resources that can act as "rainy day funds" (reserves). Requesting payment deferrals, deferring partial payments of salaries, approaching financial institutions for overdrafts and short-term loans, and keeping tabs on government welfare packages are some strategies that might help your cause.

You might also want to use this time to reassess your organisation's systems, develop procedures, document organisational history, practice



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processes for efficiency and transform your organisational efficiency as you wait for the economy to bounce back. Engaging in corporate social responsibility projects, in a minimally invasive manner, would be another desirable strategy that could enhance your good will. It's important to note that these are desirable actions which have their own unique resource constraints. Assess whether you can afford to do it.

Thriving Tomorrow - The Reactive Mode:

It might just be the right time to transform your organisational culture into a proactive strategic thinking culture. Some of the activities you could engage in include setting up cross-functional teams to discuss your organisation's future, brainstorm new ideas, and prepare for future opportunities like developing branding elements that express the

credibility/impact of your organisation's work that you could potentially use in your next grant or investment cycle. On one hand, these activities are strategic, on the other, they provide hope to your employees. However, you want to be mindful of not draining the organisation's resources away from its priority areas like production and sales.

To sum it up, balancing between exploration and exploitation would be the key to survive amidst this crisis while preparing for a brighter future. The challenges might be overwhelming for MSMEs more than any other enterprises. Please understand that this is just another phase and it will pass. Being extra vigilant on your resources and strategies can help you survive. **B**

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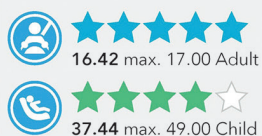


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Covid's Lesson For Top Brass

YOUNG MANAGERS EAGER TO ADOPT PANDEMIC-INDUCED CHANGES



Basant Chaudhary is a Poet, Writer, Chairman of BLC and Basant Chaudhary Foundation. (feedback@basantchaudhary.com)

Covid19 has been plaguing the planet for over a year and a half. The end of the killer pandemic is nowhere in sight. Most facets of our life have been turned topsy-turvy. So it would be criminally clichéd to ask whether business leadership style too has changed during these catastrophic times. It may though be pertinent to ask as to who has adapted better to the changed business scenario: top brass or budding managers.

By its very nature, youth is more amenable to change. Unburdened by the legacy of the past and enthused by the promise of a bright future, young managers have always been in the forefront of embracing modern ways. But the green signal has to come from the top. Unfortunately, the big bosses are too steeped in their antediluvian management and business style to shake off the past and catch up with the times.

But Covid19 is now shaking the big bosses out of their slumber. It is becoming increasingly obvious that companies which had adopted digitalisation early have not only coped with the current crisis better but are also way ahead of competition. Pro-active change in leadership styles is the secret of their success. Google is a stellar example of what I would call



a revolution. We are now witnessing a part of the Google act happening around us in the form of remote or work-from-home working.

Did we have to wait for a worldwide pandemic to adopt a work style which enamors us today? Too large a section of the top business leadership would still judge young managers by office attendance than by productivity. By stubbornly sticking to their outmoded thinking in this disease-ravaged time, the bosses are also putting the lives of managers at grave risk. These 'pucca' top managers are always found swearing by 'dhandha' and mocking modern management which is more empirical, measurable, data and welfare driven.

Doesn't remote working make more sense even from the 'profit-only' perspective of these 'pucca' bosses? You save big money on office real estate. Conveyance expenses get drastically reduced. Young managers have more time and energy to focus on their real job. The list goes on and on though with the caveat that remote working cannot be all pervasive particularly for blue

collar workers in manufacturing workshops.

To optimise benefits from remote working, the top managers - who are invariably senior in years - need to change their outlook. Gone are the days when micro management used to be the in-thing and work used to be extracted through fear and threat of punishment. A well-qualified young manager certainly does not relish his immediate boss staring down his shoulders all the time. Why this lack of trust? Is it just because the bosses were treated this way by their higher-ups in the typical saas-bahu (mother-in-law vs. daughter-in-law) manner?

Even basic knowledge of modern human resource development techniques would help. There are tested and proven ways of enhancing engagement of managers, especially young ones, with the company. Measurement of performance can be made more objective and task-relevant through techniques like balanced scorecard. I am not advocating escape from accountability for young executives. However, their invasive monitoring should be

a big 'no'.

But are the old economy chiefs willing to give up hierarchy and run a flatter organisation? If they are not, then they will have to, not only because modern systems are bearing better results but also because the days of whip-wielding slave masters are gone. New ways of optimising human resources are emerging and are being lapped up by enlightened top bosses and companies.

However, it is plain as day that only the top bosses can lead the way to change, particularly in our part of the world. We are still living in semi-feudal times. Howsoever eager and enthusiastic young managers may be regarding modern management, they can do little till those who hold the purse strings choose to listen. So the prime task of upcoming managers, management gurus and B-schools is to promote and propagate the advantages of remote functioning and a host of allied changes for business.

Or shall we wait for more cataclysmic occurrences before we are compelled to adopt the enlightened path! **B**



Covid's Lesson For Top Brass

YOUNG MANAGERS EAGER TO ADOPT PANDEMIC-INDUCED CHANGES

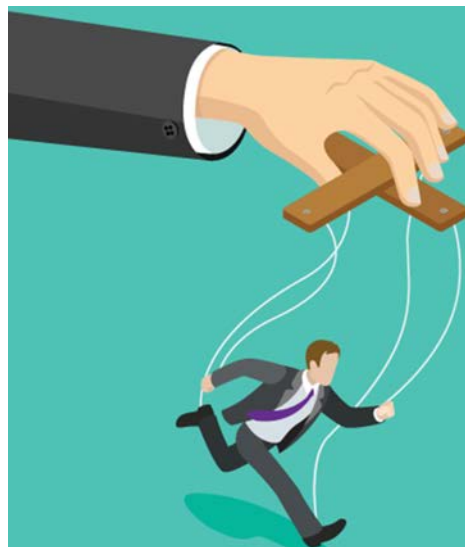


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MIT DATA SCIENTIST: LOCKDOWNS NOT CORRELATED WITH FEWER DEATHS BUT ARE CORRELATED WITH MORE UNEMPLOYMENT

Coming to grips with the failure of lockdowns is important for several reasons.



JON MILTIMORE IS THE MANAGING EDITOR OF FEE. ORG. HIS WRITING/REPORTING HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF ARTICLES IN TIME MAGAZINE, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, CNN, FORBES, FOX NEWS, AND THE STAR TRIBUNE.

Dozens of studies show that lockdowns were an ineffective pandemic response. The list just got longer.

In May, Youyang Gu, an MIT-trained engineer and data scientist, released

data showing that government restrictions were not correlated with lower Covid mortality in America. Government restrictions were correlated with higher unemployment, however.

"In the US, there is no correlation between Covid deaths and changes in unemployment rates. However, blue states are much more likely to have higher increases in unemployment," wrote Gu, the creator of covid19-projections.com, a pandemic modeling site. "More restrictions in a state is NOT correlated with fewer Covid 19 deaths. However, more restrictions is correlated with higher unemployment."

Recognising the Failure of Lockdowns

The Covid 19 pandemic is finally winding down and more and more people are beginning to acknowledge some hard truths about the failures of the collective response to the virus.

George Orwell famously observed that during deceitful times telling the truth is a revolutionary act, so the fact that so many people are finally acknowledging hard truths appears to be a sign we are emerging from deceitful times.

For some, such as Dr. Anthony Fauci, these truths are bitter



medicine. As Hannah Cox recently observed, Fauci has been on the wrong side of numerous pandemic confrontations with Sen. Rand Paul, and has found himself on the losing end each time.

Yet facts are stubborn things. And 14 months after the pandemic's arrival, we have an abundance of data that shows stay-at-home orders backfired and lockdowns were terribly ineffective at slowing the spread of the virus.

The harms of lockdowns, however, are undeniable: economic collapse, millions of jobs and businesses lost, rampant spending, surging debt and poverty, an explosion of drug overdoses, poor mental health, and a collapse of health screenings (including cancer) that will result in hundreds of thousands of excess deaths in the coming years—if not millions.

It will not be easy to acknowledge this failure. As The New York Times noted in 2017, humans struggle mightily to admit we were wrong.

"Mistakes can be hard to

4 The harms of lockdowns, however, are undeniable: economic collapse, millions of jobs and businesses lost, rampant spending, surging debt and poverty, an explosion of drug overdoses, poor mental health, and a collapse of health screenings (including cancer) that will result in hundreds of thousands of excess deaths in the coming years—if not millions.

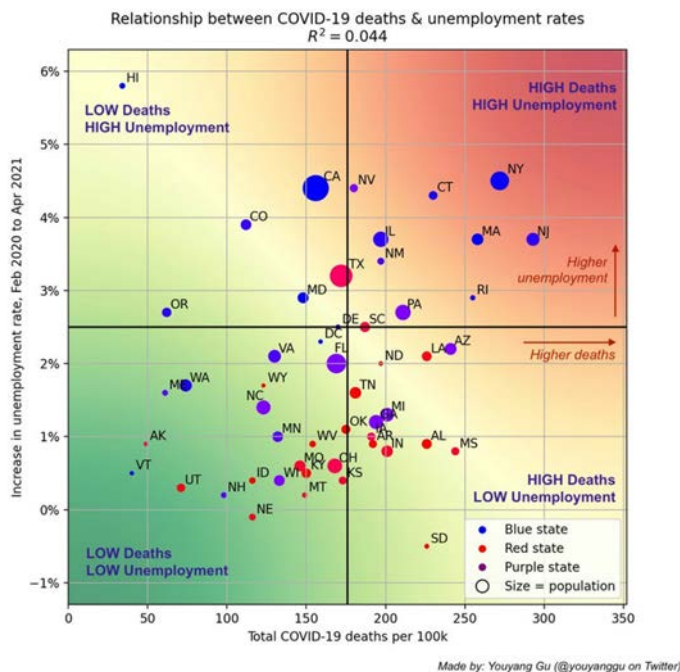
digest, so sometimes we double down rather than face them. Our confirmation bias kicks in, causing us to seek out evidence to prove what we already believe," wrote Kristin Wong. "The car you cut off has a small dent in its bumper, which obviously means that it is the other driver's fault."

There's a name for this psychological phenomenon: cognitive dissonance.

"Cognitive dissonance is what we feel when the self-concept — I'm smart, I'm kind, I'm convinced this belief is true — is threatened by evidence that we did something that wasn't smart, that we did something that hurt another person, that the belief isn't true," Carol Tavris, a co-author of the book *Mistakes Were Made (But Not by Me)*, told the Times.

Tavris added that cognitive dissonance poses a threat to our sense of self.

"To reduce dissonance, we have to modify the self-concept or accept the evidence," Tavris said. "Guess which route people prefer?"



'Dizzy With Success'

Coming to grips with the failure of lockdowns is important for several reasons.

For starters, the pandemic of 2020 will not be the last pandemic Americans face. If we are to avoid the painful experience in the future,

we'll need to better understand how the unorthodox pandemic response came about and determine which public health policies worked and which did not.

But there's an even larger lesson that can be learned. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech,

4 For starters, the pandemic of 2020 will not be the last pandemic Americans face. If we are to avoid the painful experience in the future, we'll need to better understand how the unorthodox pandemic response came about and determine which public health policies worked and which did not.

F.A. Hayek warned of the danger of mankind's inability to recognise the limits of its knowledge and power.

"There is danger in the exuberant feeling of ever growing power which the advance of the physical sciences has engendered and which tempts man to try, "dizzy with success", to use a characteristic phrase of early communism, to subject not only our natural but also our human environment to the control of a human will," Hayek said.

Dizzy with success in this age of wonders, Hayek feared humans would be bewitched by their accomplishments and believe they could achieve anything if they could only control society—"a striving which makes him not only a tyrant over his fellows, but which may well make him the destroyer of a civilisation which no brain has designed but which has grown from the free efforts of millions of individuals."

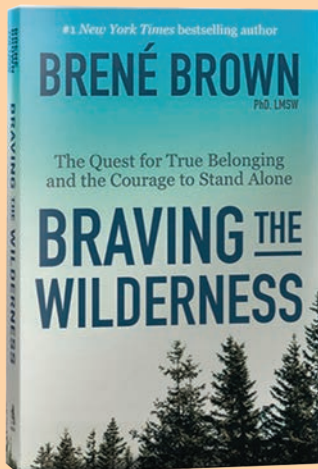
We witnessed firsthand in 2020 the fruit borne from this effort to control society to save it. There's an important lesson in humility there, if humans are wise enough to see it. **B**

Source: fee.org

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone

Author: **Brené Brown**



"True belonging doesn't require us to change who we are. It requires us to be who we are." Social scientist Brené

Brown, PhD, LMSW, has sparked a global conversation about the experiences that bring meaning to our lives: experiences of courage, vulnerability, love, belonging, shame, and empathy. In *Braving the Wilderness*, Brown redefines what it means to truly belong in an age of increased polarization. With her trademark mix of research, storytelling, and honesty, Brown will again change the cultural conversation while mapping a clear path to true belonging.

Brown argues that we're experiencing a spiritual crisis of disconnection, and introduces four practices of

true belonging that challenge everything we believe about ourselves and each other. She writes, "True belonging requires us to believe in and belong to ourselves so fully that we can find sacredness both in being a part of something and in standing alone when necessary. But in a culture that's rife with perfectionism and pleasing, and with the erosion of civility, it's easy to stay quiet, hide in our ideological bunkers, or fit in rather than show up as our true selves and brave the wilderness of uncertainty and criticism. But true belonging is not something we negotiate or accomplish with others; it's a

daily practice that demands integrity and authenticity. It's a personal commitment that we carry in our hearts." Brown offers us the clarity and courage we need to find our way back to ourselves and to each other. And that path cuts right through the wilderness. Brown writes, "The wilderness is an untamed, unpredictable place of solitude and searching. It is a place as dangerous as it is breathtaking, a place as sought after as it is feared. But it turns out to be the place of true belonging, and it's the bravest and most sacred place you will ever stand."



INSTA360 GO 2: An Everyday Action Cam

Text: Sushil Neaupane

For the longest time, GoPro's Hero series of action cameras were the norm for anyone who wanted a decent camera that could be mounted practically anywhere. And when its job was done, it'd neatly fold up in a package that almost fit in your pocket. "Almost" being the keyword here. There are also the DJI Osmos of the world competing in the same segment. Still, GoPro Heros are the category-defining products of the action cam world.

But then again, you wouldn't pull out a GoPro to shoot everyday events as you might do with your phone. Partly because GoPro's marketing material prompts you to only use a GoPro when you are on an adrenaline high and because it's not truly an everyday carry standard of portable.

You might argue that you'll have a phone on you most of the time, so it doesn't really matter. Modern smartphones are plenty capable of everyday point-and-shoot.

But what if there was a better alternative?

Something with the buttery smooth stabilisation, stupidly wide ultrawide, and portability that even the famed GoPro Heros can only dream of...

Enter the Insta360 Go 2.

In a form factor comparable to an Airpod, the Insta360 Go 2 packs an action camera, a tripod, and a charging case, while the camera unit itself is no bigger than your thumb. At its longest dimension, the Go 2 camera unit is two inches long.

Of course, the Insta360 Go 2 is not the golden bullet that their ultra-cool website and influencer marketing materials paint it to be, yet it's surprisingly close. It makes a few understandable

compromises here and there but essentially delivers on the promise of an everyday action cam.

Starting with the good aspects of the Insta360 Go 2 and with complete acknowledgment of sounding redundant, it is surprisingly portable. Yes, the size of the camera unit and the charging case is small; we've established that.

Even with the exception of size, the camera is also portable, thanks to the smart accessories that come in the box. Now when you hear the word smart, your mind probably goes to a pairable app situation by default (not that it doesn't have one). In this case, the smart comes from the application of magnets.

Inside the box, the camera comes with three mounting options, excluding the makeshift tripod, remote trigger, and tripod mount in the case, and those include a magnetic pendant, a cap mount, and a pivot stand.

The magnetic pendant is just a metallic plate with a diameter tad bit bigger than the camera unit and can be tucked under your shirt incognito. Since there are magnets involved, the tiny camera unit sticks to the mount perfectly, giving you a fantastic first-person POV.

If you want a higher angle, you have the cap mount with a small clamp that goes in the back strap of any regular cap. Apart from that, the magnets work the same way. One advantage that the cap mount has over the pendant is its adjustability though. The cap mount can pivot a little over the vertical axis giving the user a little bit more flexibility.

Lastly, there is a pivot

stand that you can stick to any smooth surface to fix the camera on to. This one is more in line with what we have come to expect of action cams.

Having these many options in any product is fantastic, but having these many things right out the box is simply mind-bending in 2021. (ahem! iPhone)

The camera unit is also waterproof for up to four meters or 13 feet, so underwater shots are welcome. It is most certainly not designed to withstand the abuse that a GoPro can handle though, as is apparent from the get-go.

The video quality is excellent at a maximum resolution of 2560X1440 at 50 frames per second. The f/2.2 wide-aperture lens churns out impressively bright and crisp video. The stabilisation is outstanding, and there are a few shooting modes to choose from.

The camera unit will shoot for 30 minutes per charge, and the included case can charge the camera up to five times. That is impressive endurance for something so small.

All that being said, there is one more surprise that this little gadget packs, and it's called horizon lock. In short, once you turn this feature on, no matter the orientation of you and your cam, it will keep the footage right side up.

Going from good to the bad, the most apparent downside to this micro-setup is the storage capacity. Even though it does not shoot 4K footage, the 28 gigs of onboard storage is not a lot of space for 1440p videos.

The only solution is

regularly connecting it to your phone or PC to move the videos over.

Another major drawback to this amazing hardware is its software. Don't get me wrong, the camera's image processing abilities are more than capable. Sadly, the same cannot be said for the mobile app. As with most other action cams, the companion app does not do the marvelous camera engineering justice.

This is especially regretful on the Insta360 Go 2 because it does not have a screen of its own and requires a smartphone screen for you to set the shot properly, for the first few times at least.

One thing good that does come out of the app though is the auto edit feature. Once you capture a series of clips, the app will generate a video that you can instantly share over social media.

You will still have the original files if you want to put in the post-editing grunt work by yourself, which if you are buying a \$300 action camera, you probably are doing. Although it is not readily available with the local vendors, you can still order it off of Amazon via online vendors. Just keep in mind that it'll cost you \$300 plus taxes when it gets here. But in our opinion, it is definitely a worthwhile buy. **B**





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beed's take on the market

During the review period of April 28 to May 27, 2021, the Nepal Stock Exchange (NEPSE) index went up by a whopping 216.32 points (+8.32%) to close at 2,815.39 points. Although the country has been hard-hit by the second wave of coronavirus pandemic and the political turmoil, the secondary market continued with its upward momentum. On 27 May 2021, NEPSE crossed trading volume of over Rs 14.768 billion and reached 2815.39 points, making a record in terms of transactions in the history of secondary market in Nepal. As a result, the total market volume during the review period increased substantially by 27.15% and stood at Rs 173.93 billion.

During the review period, contrary to the previous review period, all sub-indices landed in the green zone.

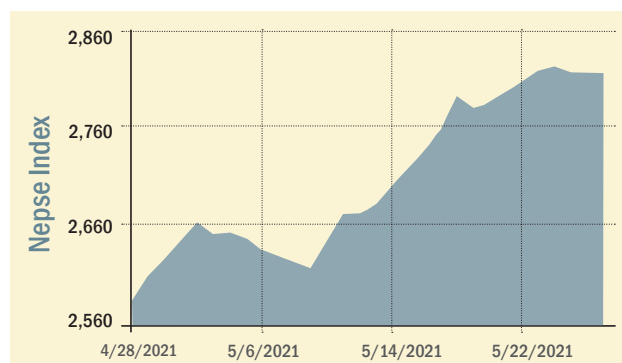
Finance sub-index (+32.13%) was the biggest gainer as share value of Gurkhas Finance (+Rs 234), Goodwill Finance (+Rs 151) and Manjushree Finance (+Rs 156) went up. Development Bank sub-index (+22.24%) was second in line with the increase in the share value of Excel Development (+Rs 112), Miteri Development (+Rs 105) and Karnali Development (+Rs 96). Hydropower sub-index (+19.99%) also followed suit with the rise in share value of Radhi Bidhyut (+Rs 590), Barun Hydropower (+Rs 268) and Arun Valley Hydropower (+Rs 268). Likewise, Non-Life Insurance

sub-index (+14.43%) surged as share value of Rastriya Beema Company (+Rs 6200), Shikhar Insurance (+Rs 266) and IME General (+Rs 230) went up. Others sub-index (+11.05%) also rose marginally with increase in share value of Nepal Telecom (+Rs 88). Similarly, Life Insurance sub-index (+8.90%) also witnessed a rise in the share value of Asian Life Insurance (+Rs 220), Surya Life Insurance (+Rs 204) and Life Insurance (+Rs 189).

Manufacturing & Processing sub-index (+5.20%) witnessed an increase in the share value of Bottlers Nepal (Terai) (+Rs 2309), Himalayan Distillery (+Rs 176) and Shivam Cements (+Rs 41). Following this, Commercial Bank sub-index (+4.29%) increased with the drop in share prices of Sanima Bank (+Rs 58), Bank of Kathmandu (+Rs 36) and Laxmi Bank (+Rs 36). Similarly, Microfinance sub-index (+4.11%) also saw a rise in the share value of Mahila Microfinance (+Rs 642), National Microfinance (+Rs 338) and RMDC Microfinance (+Rs 224). Likewise, Hotels and Tourism sub-index (+1.36%) went up marginally as share price of Taragaon Regency Hotel (+Rs 42) went up.

News and Highlights

The Securities Exchange Board of Nepal (SEBON) released a press statement to notify all involved in the secondary market to not engage in sharing information on the rise



Source: Nepal Stock Exchange Ltd.

or fall of share price of NESPE indicators and listed companies so that it does not encourage, motivate or discourage investors on the basis of unauthorised statements. SEBON believes that various individuals and groups have been giving unaccredited interviews and statements on various social media platforms regarding the increment or decrement of share price. In line with this, SEBON is vigilant in preventing any activities affecting the securities market, especially at a time when the second wave of coronavirus is hitting the economy, and thus, it is closely monitoring such activities.

Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) issued a directive barring banks and financial institutions (BFIs) from making short-term investments in the secondary market and prohibiting them from investing in the stocks of microfinance companies. At a time when the economy is facing excess liquidity due to fall in loan investment to real sectors, BFIs have been found investing large amounts of money in the secondary market and thus, earning profits on their third quarter results even though the nation is undergoing negative effects due to Covid 19 pandemic. As per the directive, BFIs are permitted to invest in stocks of listed companies only for a period of more than a year. By doing this, NRB is ensuring that a capping measure can prevent BFIs from over exposure in share-trading.

In the public issue front,

during the review period, SEBON has added the Initial Public Offering (IPO) of Dordi Khola Hydropower worth Rs 295 million to its pipeline. Siddhartha Capital has been appointed as the issue manager. SEBON has also approved two debenture issuances namely: '10 years, 8.5%, Prabhu Bank Debenture 2087' by Prabhu Bank worth Rs 1.6 billion and '6 Years, 8.5% RBBL Debenture 2083' by Rastriya Baniya Bank worth Rs 1 billion.

Outlook

Despite the prohibitory restrictions in place in almost every part of the nation due to the threat of the second wave of Coronavirus and uncertainty on the political front, investors strong participation continued to drive NEPSE towards a new uncharted zone. Even though the market showed some correction at the beginning of the review period, the market has continued to swing upwards since the second week of May. It is yet to see the impact of the new directive by the central bank directing BFIs participation in the secondary market, nonetheless considering the current market movement, retail investors should refrain from making investments based on 'herd mentality' and make investment decisions based on adequate fundamental analysis of the scrips. **B**

This is an analysis from beed Management Pvt. Ltd. No expressed or implied warrant is made for usefulness or completeness of this information and no liability will be accepted for consequences of actions taken on the basis of this analysis.

	April 28th, 2021	May 27th, 2021	% Change
NEPSE Index	2,599.07	2,815.39	8.32%
Sub-Indices			
Commercial Bank	1,780.69	1,857.05	4.29%
Development Bank	2,822.45	3,450.10	22.24%
Hydropower	2,514.02	3,016.47	19.99%
Finance	1,249.40	1,650.83	32.13%
Non-Life Insurance	12,899.72	14,761.55	14.43%
Others	1,978.38	2,196.93	11.05%
Hotels and Tourism	3,336.84	3,382.28	1.36%
Microfinance	5,220.59	5,435.05	4.11%
Life Insurance	16,930.71	18,437.77	8.90%
Manufacturing & Processing	5,561.29	5,850.45	5.20%

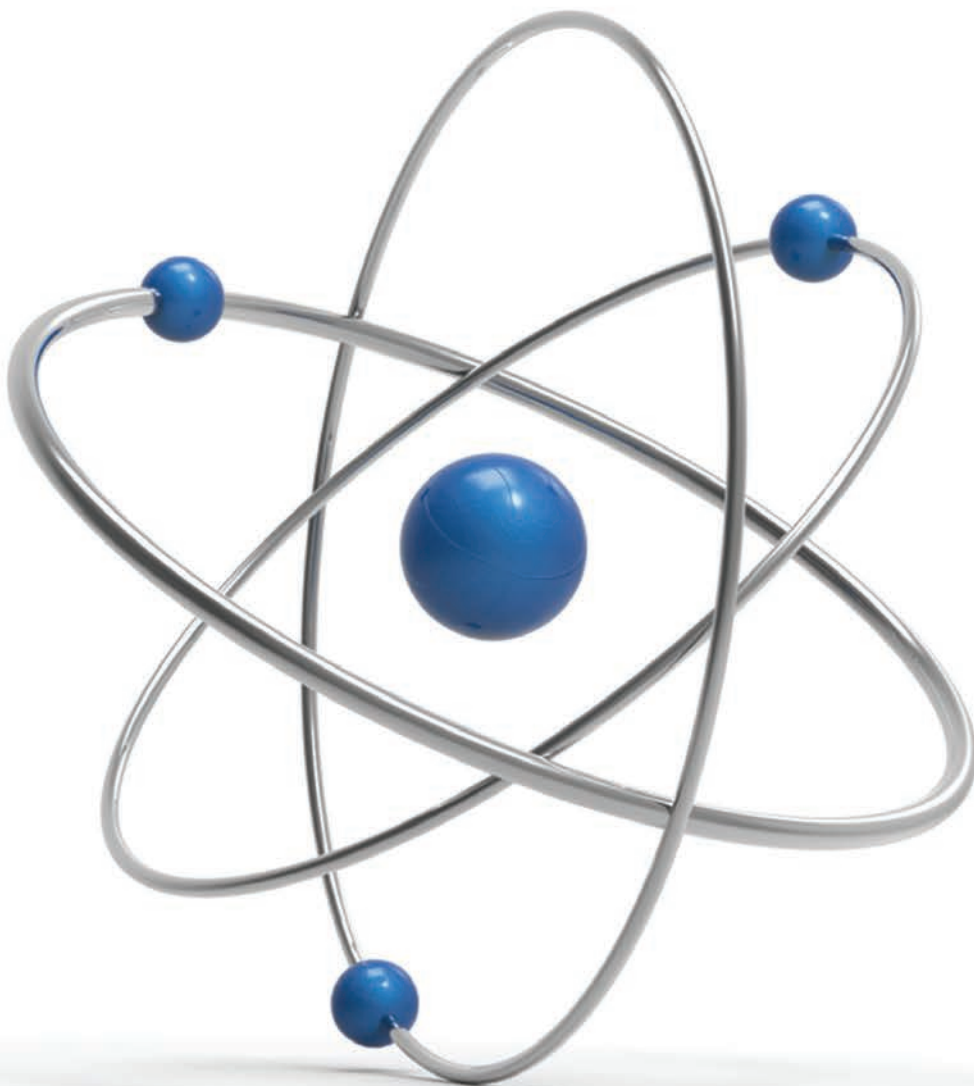
Source: Nepal Stock Exchange Ltd.



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China: Next Superpower In Oil



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Oil-the super commodity in the financial markets is embracing an interesting phase with most developed economies observing recovery trends from the pandemic. With one eye on trade economics and the other on supply equation, crude oil has resurfaced from the lows of last year at the height of the Covid 19 situation. The prices have jumped by 40% since the beginning of the year and the bullish run is set to continue with nations coming out of lockdowns and prohibitory orders.

Recovery Mode

One of the strongest proponents supporting the bullish run of crude oil is the recovery of the Chinese economy. With most of the global economy remaining in varying stages of lockdowns, China's economic growth rate stood at 6.5% in 4Q of 2020 with an overall growth of 2.3% for 2020. With the attained figures, the economy of China was the only developed nation to have expanded in 2020.

Demand Surge

The importing numbers of crude oil have increased significantly as the refiners look to sustain the growing demand attributed to the increased activity in the industrial and transport sectors. After lowering of Covid 19

cases in early 2021, authorities managed to lift lockdowns and other restrictions enabling economic activities to resume. The resulting recovery in China drove higher oil demand. According to the numbers from the country's General Administration of Customs, crude oil imports for 2020 inclined by 7.3% in comparison to 2019 to reach a record 542.4 million metric tons. The staggering figures were achieved despite disruptions caused by the pandemic in the first quarter and the developing volatility in the markets. This surge was driven by refineries increasing their operations to sustain domestic demand along with commercial stockpiling from the low prices.



Upgraded 'Teapots' in China

The major growth in the refining capacity of China has its roots in a vital regulatory shift in 2015 when independent refiners (also known as 'teapots') were first allowed to import crude oil. The reasoning for the change was that in return for import quotas, they would inevitably upgrade, modernise and instil wider competition and efficiency in the largely state-dominated oil industry. With increase of crude oil imports due to rise in the refining capacity, China surpassed the US to become the world's largest importer.

The so-called teapots are now leading the way with larger integrated refineries; with about 1.4 million barrels a day of crude processing capacity from four projects under construction. As per China National Petroleum Corp's Economics & Technology Research Institute, by 2025, the crude processing capacity is expected to touch one billion metric tons a year or 20 million barrels per day which is a major jump from the 17.5 million barrels at the end of 2020.

Impact of New Capacity

The rise in the refining capacity of China is slowly having an impact across the global refining industry. With the substantial rise, more crude oil is finding its way to China

2020. According to the EIA, US exports to China averaged 719,000 barrels per day in December 2020. China remains one of the largest importers of the US crude although the figures fell to 269,000 barrels per day in February.

Return of Price Volatility

OPEC reported a 15% month-to-month increase in its OPEC Reference Basket in December to record \$49.17 per barrel, the highest level since February 2020 before the economic impact of the Covid 19 was observed. Despite the rally, the year-on-year average for 2020 was still the lowest recorded since 2016. This price rally has continued in 2021, with the OPEC Reference Basket rising further to \$66.86 per barrel at the end of April. The prices of crude oil are believed to have potential for a further rally in 2021 as the rollout for vaccines across the world have enabled social distancing restrictions to be gradually lifting with subsequent resumption of normal economic activities.

Conclusion

As economic recoveries stutter when the stimulus package ends and government support is withdrawn, it could lead to further volatility in the oil markets. This will further delay the return to normal economic activity and a subsequent dampening effect on the demand for crude oil. However, given China's refinery capacity to lead the world, it will play a larger role in the regional and global markets for oil and refined products signaling the arrival of China as the next superpower in the oil markets. **B**

and other Asian nations and less is routed to the traditional western counterparts. This surge has allowed giant state operators to export more although increased production by China is largely trapped inside the domestic market due to export quotas.

Supply Patterns

Saudi Arabia regained its place as China's main supplier of crude oil in December, accounting for nearly 18% of the total imports at 1.6 million barrels a day. The US exports to China have also inclined to jump by 88% in

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Judicial Integrity is the Key to Judicial Governance



Krishna Gyawali
Former GoN Secretary

Prafulchandra Natwarlal Bhagwati (December 21, 1921 - June 15, 2017), the eminent jurist and celebrated Chief Justice of India who pioneered the concept of public interest litigation (PIL) and judicial activism into the Indian judicial governance system, had once said in one of his unique judgements:

“Law is not a mausoleum. It is not an antique to be taken down, dusted, admired and put back on the shelf. It is like an old but vigorous tree, having roots in history, yet continuously taking new grafts and putting out new sprouts and occasionally dropping dead wood. It is essentially a social process, the end product of which is justice and hence it must change with changing social values. Otherwise, there will be estrangement between law and justice and law will cease to have legitimacy.”

(Cited from https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/P.N._Bhagwati)

Justice Bhagwati also emphasised that to avoid this “estrangement between law and justice” and to ascertain law entails legitimacy, it is extremely important that judicial integrity is embedded into the judicial system. If the public faith in country’s judiciary and judicial system is eroded, if the courts lose their credibility, and if the people start criticising and condemning the judges’ ethical behaviours in their private conversations but loud enough



to be heard in public debates as well, we know that there is a deep deficit of judicial integrity.

Judicial integrity has been more clearly defined in terms of “six values” that have been espoused by what is known as Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct. These principles, that were endorsed by The Judicial Integrity Group’s second meeting held in Bangalore in 2006, have largely shaped the ethical aspects of how judges and judiciaries should perform, how their conduct can be explained as being “appropriate” and “acceptable”, and how judiciary should be able to enforce such conduct. The Group, which was formed in 2000 as an “independent, autonomous, not-for-profit and voluntary entity” was seen at its commencement as an informal group of Chief Justices or senior judges with proven expertise, experience, passion and integrity.

Six Values

The Bangalore Principles propounded six values of judicial integrity, which were subsequently endorsed by three principal agencies of

the United Nations – the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, and the Economic and Social Commission. These values are independence, impartiality, integrity, propriety, equality, and competence and diligence.

While administering justice, judges are not only required to be independent in relation to society and particular parties to the dispute and also free from inappropriate connections with the legislative and executive branches of government, they must also appear to be so in the eyes of a neutral observer. They should also not be holding any bias, prejudice, economic or other interests and have been involved in any controversies.

Likewise, integrity which means judges should be “above reproach in the view of a reasonable observer” for their conducts and behaviors is the key to restoring public faith in judiciary. Judges should always avoid “impropriety” and also appear to have done so before the public eyes, because they are always under constant public scrutiny. They cannot be expected to accept cases

involving their relations and relationships both personal and professional that can lead to reasonable suspicion about their impartial judgments in the cases in question.

The other equally important element of judicial integrity is equality. Judges should not discriminate the parties in disputes based on gender, religion, race, colour, nationality, caste, disability, marital and socio-economic status, etc. It is to be ensured that all are treated equal once they enter the doorstep of the judiciary anticipating fair and impartial trial. And last but not the least, judges should always be effortful for enhancing professional competence and diligence by earning and sharpening their knowledge, skills and aptitude and must always worry to improve their personal qualities also.

Nepal Scenario

Now, what is the actual condition of Nepal’s judges and judiciary against this backdrop? It is heartening to note that Nepal has also been a part of The Group as it has attended its several meetings and deliberations. Nepal’s constitution has provided an inalienable right to public interest litigation through writ petitions which are handled by the apex Supreme Court applying its extraordinary jurisdiction. Nepali judges have had their imprint on the evolution of judicial activism as the verdicts they have passed have often set a remarkable history, such as in the controversial cases of the parliament dissolution the first of whose kind was when Bishwa Nath Upadhyaya was the Chief Justice during 1991-95. Justices like Ram Prasad Shrestha, Kalyan Shrestha and Sushila Karki, to name just a few, have earned fame due basically to their verdicts on PIL involving highly contentious political, constitutional and



ethical (corruption) cases. Justice Karki had even had to face the impeachment motion in the parliament for the bold position she took over the police IGP appointment to the utter displeasure of the then political parties in power, the Nepali Congress and NCP (Maoist Center), which however was subsequently withdrawn following massive public pressure and resentment. Their verdicts and the consequent precedents have contributed to restoring judicial integrity in the judicial system and improving judicial good governance in the country.

Recent Optimism

Let us look at the most recent court verdicts that came in a series in the last couple of weeks in the light of judicial integrity. I pick five such verdicts and decisions by the Supreme Court and particularly by its five-member Constitutional Court.

The first and foremost, the Supreme Court nullified the expansion of the cabinet done by the PM after the House was dissolved, on the ground that it was “unconstitutional to do this because a PM who is no longer a member of the House of the Representative due to its dissolution stands as a caretaker PM who is bereft of such businesses including cabinet reshuffling”. The Interim Order issued to this effect caused ipso facto the removal of as many as 20 cabinet ministers allowing only four-plus-PM to remain in the government. While this “unexpected” verdict has led to a virtual stand-still in the government, the protagonists have admired it as being “historic” for protecting and preserving the constitution and restored constitutional or judicial supremacy. Some observers are bemused whether this is actually a glaring example of judicial activism involving the court in political matters beyond its jurisdiction. But there is a very thin line of demarcation between “judicial activism” and “judicial integrity leading to judicial supremacy” in a politically fluid situation like that of Nepal at present.

Meanwhile, the court has earned widespread accolade for its decision to abrogate the cabinet decision of exempting ambassadorial candidates from requiring minimum academic qualification of a graduate's degree if they are ex-ministers. This was unanimously welcomed as a course correction of the executive's unruly governance style by the judiciary.

The third relates to an Interim Order on the Citizenship Ordinance. The importance of the decision does not really lie in explaining the merits and contents of the Ordinance but the context and rationale against which it was challenged. The court aptly interpreted the impropriety of the Ordinance saying that an ordinance is normally promulgated only if there is an acute urgency to do something immediately when there is no parliament session in progress, but there was no such urgency in the present case as the Bill to that effect had been lying pending in the House for the last three years, testifying to utter negligence and reluctance on the part of the government to move it forward securing political consensus, considered inevitable because citizenship has always been a controversial matter in Nepali political sociology. The court was also blunt in accusing the government of “bringing the Ordinance out just a day after the dissolution of the House, which proved it was only to serve its vested political interest and create comfort for the regime”. It further alleged that the government by issuing this Ordinance was breaching the principle of separation of power. The verdict had used the word “pseudo-legislation” to denote that the Ordinance has come out through a short-cut route by evading parliamentary deliberation.

The verdict also put a powerful question: “Just in case the Ordinance is not endorsed by the Parliament within 60 days after it assumes its session, would not it create serious constitutional complications regarding the citizenship certificates that will already have

been issued to the people as per the Ordinance?”

The verdict, though extremely unpleasant to the government which wanted some political dividend by addressing this hotly contested and long-overdue popular agenda, was music to the ears of its opponents who were protesting the current regime's inclination to the “rule by ordinance” undermining the “rule of law”. Many observers have taken it as a major milestone in the country's history of judicial governance.

In another separate ruling, the court ordered for nullifying the decision of the ruling UML's so-called “General Convention Organising Committee” to expel four floor-crossing members of the Karnali Provincial Assembly, saying, “the law does not recognise a mechanism which has not been legitimised by the relevant Act pertaining to Political Parties, 2073 BS”. This was another audacious decision of the court in the light of judicial activism. Meanwhile, the court rejected the government's appeal to “vacate” the interim order saying it was fully in accordance with the spirit of the constitution.

In the similar vein, Chief Justice Cholendra SJB Rana resolved a contentious issue of who will be picked in the Constitutional Bench and how, ending growing mutual disrespect between the bar and the bench regarding qualification and disqualification of the judges to be included for the hearing by the bench. The court effected an amendment in the Constitutional Bench Rules recognising the seniority order of the sitting judges. This was also seen as a good step for improving judicial governance in the court proceedings.

Selective Integrity

Critics argue that though the Supreme Court's recent decisions have given way to hope and optimism regarding judicial integrity and governance, there is still a selective approach adopted in picking the cases for passing verdicts. For example, the controversial Ordinance

pertaining to Constitutional Council Act Amendment has not been touched upon by the court while explaining the impropriety of the ‘rule by ordinance’. This Ordinance, like the one on citizenship, is also not seen being urgently important in terms of immediateness, nor does it meet the common procedural norms of ordinance promulgation. For instance, the same Ordinance was issued some six months ago and was withdrawn upon vehement protest from the civil society and opposition political parties. The fact that there are already 17 writ petitions pending in the court suggests that this has not received due priority in the court. The opponents to the Ordinance argue that it violates the constitutional spirit of check and balance among the three state organs as well as the opposition leader in the lower house of the parliament by effectively curtailing their representation in the Council's meeting which sits for recommending the appointees for various constitutional bodies including ambassadors. Some have even argued that the reason why hearing has been delayed on the writs against this Ordinance is that the Chief Justice himself has sat in the meetings of the Council and recommended his nominees for constitutional positions. This ethical conflict of interest, if true, is a serious matter that comes in the way of ensuring judicial integrity in the court and harms good judicial governance in the country.

The sooner the Chief Justice and the Supreme Court come clean of this deep-seated doubt in some critics' minds, the better it will turn out to be for restoring the image of judiciary and the judges. After all, Nepal's Supreme Court is the last bastion of hope for preserving and protecting the country's constitution, the ultimate custodian of democracy, justice and people's fundamental rights, and also the insurer of judicial integrity and judicial good governance. Applying all six values of judicial integrity, including “equality” is important in this respect. **B**



Migrant Workers Odyssey



Rameshore Khanal
Former Finance Secretary, GoN

Until the middle of March 2020, government and people in Nepal thought that Covid 19 pandemic is tractable. Segments of tourism industry that relied mostly on foreign tourists had started to feel the coming on of a dreadful period. Other contributors to the economy were generally unaffected. Government thought that it can be contained with conventional wisdom. People were asked for mass lighting of diyas hoping that with this collective act, hitherto unknown virus will not dare to invade. In neighbouring India, people obediently lit diyas, banged pots and pans in unison, and honoured the government-announced people's curfew.

These didn't work, the virus tricked the tricksters. Then came a hastily announced lockdown. The border between India and Nepal was closed abruptly without considering that there might be people in the middle of their journey returning home. Normally around the end of April every year, thousands of Nepali seasonal workers return from short-term work in the different Indian states.

As businesses closed, construction activities stopped, many Nepalis found themselves out of job. They defied the lockdown and walked hundreds of miles to return home little earlier than they normally did in the past years. They arrived



at different border points in western Nepal bordering Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh of India only to find that Nepali authorities would not let them in.

For days, hundreds of groups of people camped near the border at different checkpoints urging authorities to show compassion to people who brought much needed remittance to their home country. Some even risked their lives to cross the mighty Mahakali river swimming in the night to enter homeland. Ultimately, the federal government -responsible for border control - relented as local municipalities and provincial governments reported that the situation in makeshift camps on the other side of the border holding returnees was getting worse. There was some relief.

Several returnees spoke to media about their plight. They said they would find work in their own place and not go for short-term jobs in neighbouring country. The provincial and municipal government promised that there would be jobs for people. Tall promises was made by the federal government through the new budget announced for fiscal 2021 that new job creation programs will have substantially higher allocation and will target those who are forced to leave

native places just for short-term jobs.

The promises failed; people preferred "making a living" than "saving lives"

For a few months after returnees were allowed in, government officials were hopeful that there will be renewed impetus on agriculture and micro-enterprises as younger people will remain in their villages, they will try innovation in subsistence agriculture, start micro-industries in the villages and economy will gain more than what the meager remittance was giving.

Politicians claimed that the Covid crisis also came with good opportunity. However, just a few months later, the scenes at the border checkpoints was more than reversed.

Beginning from the third week of August, even when tough lockdowns in Nepal were not relaxed and the spike of Covid 19 cases in India were at its peak, thousands of people started queuing at several border checkpoints for entry into India, obviously for jobs.

Many of them had invitation from previous employers, from apple orchard owners in Himachal Pradesh, etc. In normal years, this was not the time for Nepali seasonal worker exodus into India. People migrated mostly after all the autumn festivities and

when the summer crop harvest was over. The freezing winter and lack of jobs in their locality have been major reasons for people in the western mountain region of Nepal to migrate to India for seasonal jobs; it has remained a long tradition.

Between August and December 2020, it was estimated that over 20,000 people crossed the border every day for short-term jobs on the other side. Almost invariably, everyone asked at the checkpoints reported that "making a living" is important than "life" itself, therefore they were willing to take the risk even knowing that Covid 19 cases in India had peaked.

Most municipalities in the region from where people left for India didn't even try to assess why their citizens were moving out, let alone implement employment generation programs that could hold people in their homeland. Some influential provincial and municipal authorities interviewed claimed that people were exercising their freedom and they were leaving on their volition. Federal government's plethora of programs for employment generation did not take off due to institutional weaknesses. As a result, a better change that was just about to come, simply vanished. **B**



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Clear Tax Laws Needed For E-Commerce Business



Arju Dahal

B.A.LLLB graduate from Kathmandu School of Law. Advocate and Partner at Artemis Law & Policy

Nepal's digital economy has been growing at an expeditious rate, fundamentally changing how business is conducted today. As internet access expands to more Nepalis, more prefer to conduct business through this new mode. A recent report by Nepal Telecommunications Authority revealed that about 22.8 million Nepalis have access to the internet, showing the explosive potential digital economy carries.

Digital business operations in Nepal

Today, Daraz, Pathao, Foodmandu, and Food Mario have become household names in big cities like Kathmandu. With their entrance and expansion in the market, we have seen a steady evolution in technology and businesses.

Nepal Rastra Bank revealed that an astonishing 112,706 e-commerce transactions worth Rs. 8.2 billion were made during one single month in 2020. It is safe to assume that we are fastly leaving behind the world of traditional purchase methods.

The Business-to-Business (B2B) operations that conduct business between two or multiple firms and Business-to-Consumer (B2C) operations that operate between Business to Consumer, more popularly practiced by Daraz are

predominant and ubiquitous models of e-commerce practice in Nepal. The growing popularity of these digital firms shows how they are becoming more a norm than an exception.

Moreover, digital business operations have also paved an opportunistic path for online advertisement that connect business houses with potential consumers. Digital businesses operations have widened scope to not only Nepali companies but also foreign businesses to market their products via Nepal's IP address.

How are these businesses governed

The back-to-back lockdown due to the pandemic has accentuated the e-commerce importance. However, these businesses, most of which lack physical presence, earn millions paying either minimal taxes or no taxes. Businesses have evolved. But the Nepali tax regime and governance have not. The latter therefore needs to catch up with the former.

Despite massive growth and acceptance, the sector is still largely unregulated. No laws govern Nepali e-commerce businesses except some elementary rules such as mandatory registration and verification from the Office of Company Registrar.

For example, we still have an Income Tax Act dating two decades back (Income Tax Act, 2058) that has failed to acknowledge the existence of online businesses. The IT Act classifies taxable income and taxable businesses under four different headings: 1) Business; 2) Employment; 3) Investment; and 4) Windfall Gain. The Act excludes any form of online business from its definition.

In the absence of proper governing laws, numerous businesses are not guided properly and are left out of the

tax bracket. This is especially true for businesses that are run exclusively online through popular social media portals. Registered businesses suffer the consequences of competing with businesses that have no formal format.

The government response to fill this loophole has been slow; recently, it introduced a bill to regulate e-commerce operation but the bill has failed to see any daylight.

Online advertisements using Nepal's IP address

Except for popular services like Daraz, Foodmandu, Urban Girl, registered under the laws of the country, there are detectable non-resident as well as the resident companies that avail online services from the country's IP addresses.

Noticeable examples include many local online papers that are operating with or without registration that receive considerable numbers of likes and views. As the most viewed daily papers online, resident and non-resident companies put their advertisements on their web platforms, helping them earn important revenues. Most of these commissions, however, are not taxed because of the lack of specific laws that govern foreign online advertisements using country's IP address.

Likewise, Facebook and Instagram have become easy platforms for people to start an online page that deliver news, goods or services without registration. Users of these social sites can find various advertisements from local and foreign companies that are made through the country's IP addresses; however as in the case of online papers, the revenue earned by people using these social sites through foreign/local advertisements or sale of goods remain largely

untouched. The earned income is directly proceeded into individual account without being taxed.

What is needed

First and foremost, a clear understanding of how e-commerce works and how it is changing the economy and creating value is necessary. Once authorities understand the full extent of its impact can they begin to update the existing tax law or introduce new laws that can govern the sector. The definition of e-commerce/online businesses needs deliberation and incorporation in the Income Tax Act. Similarly, the provision of Tax Deduction at Source (TDS) needs to be more specific so as to cover services that involve resident and non-resident companies and people. Since the digital economy has rendered physical presence useless and unnecessary, the definition of permanent establishment needs to be broadened. Furthermore, it is necessary to identify how digital non-resident companies are availing services to Nepali IP users from Nepal. These companies need to be brought under the tax domain under Nepal's taxation laws. The definition of taxable income and taxable businesses need to be defined in a broader sense. To avoid any unnecessary burden and double taxation or charges on a single transaction of goods and services, it is necessary to determine whether the services availed by these businesses, the income generated, or the online transactions made is to be charged. **B**



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Nepal Civil Society organisations call on the USTR and the European Commission to support Least Developed Countries' request on extension of transition period

Centre for South Asian Studies, Community Self Reliance Centre (CSRC), Environment, Culture, Agriculture Research and Development Society- Nepal, Forum for Protection of Public Interest (Pro Public), Forward Nepal, LDC Watch, Local Initiatives for Biodiversity Research and Development (LI-BIRD), Niti Foundation, Society for Legal & Environmental Analysis & Development Research (LEADERS), South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) and Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) expressed serious concern with attempts to weaken and undermine the duly motivated request of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to the TRIPS Council of the World Trade Organisation (IP/C/W/668) and the lack of progress on the request.

The letter states that presently LDCs are facing the worst economic crisis seen in the past 30 years as a result of Covid 19 according to UNCTAD's LDC Report 2020, which also forecasts falling income levels, widespread employment losses and widening fiscal deficits. At least 50% of the world's extremely poor live in LDCs, and the current covid crisis is expected to push at least 32 million more people into poverty in 2020. The report informs that "at least 43 out of the 47 LDCs will likely experience a fall in their average income" and that "the current account deficit of LDCs is forecast to widen from \$41 billion (or 3.8% of their collective GDP) in 2019 to \$61 billion (or 5.6% of their GDP) in 2020, the highest value ever".

It also says that shockingly the 2021 Financing for

Sustainable Development Report (FSDR) of the UN Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development has found that "Covid 19 could lead to a lost decade for development - one most pronounced in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs)". LDCs' situation is extremely alarming. At this moment LDCs need maximum policy flexibility. Even before the Covid crisis LDCs faced severe constraints, such as limited availability of skilled labour, productive capacities, access to secondary education, electricity, and internet access. The basic conditions to benefit from full TRIPS implementation are mostly absent in LDCs. They also lack affordable access to knowledge-based goods crucial for sustainable development such as access to health products including for Covid 19 such as ventilators, educational materials, green technologies. Covid 19 has worsened the situation. Even the limited progress made towards Sustainable Development Goals are expected to be reversed/ "According to a UN Study "The Covid 19 pandemic not only threatens to throw LDCs back many years in achieving SDGs on poverty, hunger, health and education, but it also exacerbates inequalities, further jeopardising the achievement of SDG5 on gender equality and women's empowerment and SDG10 on reducing inequalities." It also stresses that the "financial situation in LDCs has become more challenging, with a fall in FDI and remittances, and almost half of LDCs are at high risk of, or already in, debt distress. Limited fiscal space has meant that the fiscal response to the pandemic of most LDCs has been inadequate."

The open letter questions that in such a situation, how can the WTO's TRIPS Council, and especially the US and EU, not heed to LDCs' request? It is absolutely unconscionable especially given the fact that

Himalaya Airlines transports Vero Cell vaccines as philanthropy



In face of the second surge of Covid 19, Himalaya Airlines in line with its CSR commitment, came forward to support bringing home 200,000 doses of Vero Cell vaccines donated by the Tibet Autonomous Region Government, PRC. Himalaya's Airbus 319-115, 9N-AJK operated four back-to-back flights to Kunming on June 1 and 2 to transport the vaccines. Total 200,000 doses of SARS-CoV-2 vaccine (Vero Cell) were carried in 417 boxes at no cost by Himalaya. Each flight ferried a maximum of 105 boxes per flight. By operating these free flights, Himalaya contributed a total of US\$192,000.00 equivalent to Rs 2.25 crores approximately.

President of the airline, Zhou Enyong stated "This is a historic moment for Himalaya and its team towards supporting the Government of Nepal and the nation in its fight with the pandemic. We are honoured to operate these flights on humanitarian grounds at this crucial time."

Vice President Vijay Shrestha remarked, "This is a small yet important step by Himalaya in the service of the nation during this second surge of Covid 19. Himalaya will always stand by the people and government of Nepal in times of crisis".

Since the early stages of the pandemic, Himalaya Airlines has been actively supporting the government and the people through direct contribution with supplies.

Art. 66.1 grants LDCs an automatic right to transition period following a duly motivated request by LDCs for it states the "Council for TRIPS shall, upon duly motivated request by a least-developed country Member, accord extensions of this period."

It goes on to state that it is appalling that more than seven months since the request was made, at a time of unprecedented global crisis, with the most vulnerable bearing the worst impact, the WTO TRIPS Council has yet to grant the LDCs' request. Short transition periods granted

in the past have proven to be inadequate. And it is clear, now more than ever LDCs will require the transition period to continue post-graduation as the exceptional developmental challenges LDCs are facing will continue even after graduation.

The organisations call attention that the international community through UN resolutions 59/209 of 20 December 2004 and 67/221 of 21 December 2012, have called for the continuation of existing special and differential measures post-graduation.

Turkish Airlines once again recognised as valuable brand for the year 2021



Turkish Airlines was once again named the country's most valuable brand for 2021, according to a survey by a leading independent valuation and strategy consultancy. The airline led the list of Top 100 Turkish Brands 2021 for the fifth time in a row with a brand value of \$1.61 billion, down 18.7% from last year amid the Covid 19 pandemic, the Brand Finance survey showed.

Turkish Airlines CEO Ilker Ayci said: "We are proud to continue our success story of the previous years during the pandemic and being 'Turkey's Most Valuable Brand' once again."

Established in 1933 with a fleet of five aircraft, Star Alliance member Turkish Airlines has a fleet of 351 (passenger and cargo) aircraft flying to 325 worldwide destinations. Currently, Turkish Airlines Kathmandu operates weekly flights to Istanbul and beyond and is the only European carrier that connects Nepal directly to Europe.

The Coca-Cola Foundation supports CREASION to set up oxygen generating unit in Nepal



To overcome the worsening health crisis in Nepal due to the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, The Coca-Cola Foundation is supporting CREASION to set up an oxygen generating unit. The unit is one of the most vital medical equipment needed. The funding is in addition to a separate award

by The Coca-Cola Foundation to Nepal Red Cross Society in support of vaccination access initiatives, public vaccine awareness campaigns, and personal protective equipment for frontline workers and vulnerable populations.

The oxygen generating unit is transportable both by road and air and can be installed quickly. Since these units have already been installed in many hospitals of Nepal there would not be any further regulatory issues as well. Each unit can cater up to 50 beds and 15 cylinders in a day and is expected to meet the shortage of the life-saving gas. CREASION along with its consortium partners has already placed order for 10 units from NovAir, a France-based medical device manufacturing company.

"We know the Covid-19 crisis is far from over," said Bea Perez, President and Chairperson of The Coca-Cola Foundation. "We are proud to use our resources to support CREASION's efforts to create additional oxygen availability for Covid-19 patients in Nepal."

The oxygen producing unit will broadly benefit over 20,000 people with lifesaving oxygen supply, over 18,000 hospital beds will receive a continuous supply of oxygen for a year and over 5,000 oxygen cylinders will be refilled and delivered to the patients in need. The plant will be installed at a government hospital, in support of Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP).

Founder and President of CREASION Anand Mishra said, "Oxygen for Nepal initiated by CREASION in collaboration with other platforms is the largest non-governmental humanitarian response against Covid 19 in Nepal. We have envisioned a sustained response to this pandemic through fundraising and provision of essential medical commodities. We are grateful to The Coca-Cola Foundation for supporting our vital cause and hope to save more lives with the assistance."

Italy extends support to Nepal to fight Covid pandemic



A consignment of medical equipment and supplies from Italy arrived to support Nepal fight the second wave of the pandemic through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Italy is among the 12 EU Member States –Spain, Finland, France, Belgium, Germany, Slovenia, Austria, Malta, Denmark and Ireland responding to Nepal's call for assistance. More support is expected soon from Lithuania and Germany.

"In these challenging times, Italy is at the frontline of the fight against Coronavirus, as testified also by the Global Health Summit co-hosted with the European Commission in Rome last May 21. In the framework of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, this relief flight to Nepal is a sign of the support and solidarity of Italy towards Nepal. Once more, the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) based in Brindisi, Italy, has proven to be a crucial logistic support to humanitarian airlifts everywhere in the world" said Ambassador of Italy to Nepal, H.E. Vincenzo de Luca.

The relief equipment donated by Italy consists of 20 ventilators, 6000 isolation gowns and 10,000 protective overalls.

Honorary Consul to Italy, Pratima Pande joined by the EU Ambassador to Nepal, H.E. Nona Deprez handed over the equipment to Dr. Roshan Pokhrel, Chief Specialist from the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) at the Tribhuvan International Airport. In a true Team Europe spirit, the Ambassadors of Germany and France also participated in the ceremony. Alongside other donors, the EU will monitor the distribution and the use of the supplies across the country. The recording of the quantity of supplies entering the country and quantities moving out from the Humanitarian Staging Areas in Sinamangal, is done in the e Logistic Management Information System (eLIMS) of the MoHP.

Xiaomi launches the latest Mi flagship in Nepal



Xiaomi, the global technology leader has launched Mi 11, the latest flagship in its popular Mi Smartphone lineup in Nepal. A truly premium device, Mi 11 debuts with some groundbreaking improvements over its predecessor [1], including a Qualcomm® Snapdragon™ 888 chipset, 108MP triple rear camera, cinematic audio, and 50W wireless charging.

Commenting on the launch, Sourabh Kothari, Country General Manager, Xiaomi Nepal said, “The brand Mi aims to introduce products that are not only premium but are packed with best-in class technology that our consumers can count on. With the launch of Mi 11, we are bringing the technology that is future proof and is designed to elevate the overall user experience. Offering flagship experience, Mi 11 pushes the boundaries of innovation by combining superior cameras and performance with an immersive display”.

The ultimate pocket-sized movie studio, Mi 11 turns any novice photo and video enthusiast into a film director with its triple rear camera setup. Boasting the world's highest resolution 108MP wide-angle camera sensor for its primary shooter, Mi 11 captures crystal-clear images with dazzling detail comparable only to that of professional-grade DSLR or mirrorless cameras. A 13MP ultra-wide angle camera and 5MP tele macro lens round out the rear camera setup, offering impressive landscape and detail

shots with brilliant bokeh.

Mi 11 offers one of the best screens on the market that has received an A+ rating as well as a best display award from Display Mate, the world's leading professional display review institution. Simplicity meets convenience with its Super Resolution technology, which upgrades low resolution videos to WQHD+ quality without the worry of increased data consumption.

Mi 11 was the first phone to feature the Qualcomm® Snapdragon™ 888, redefining flagship performance with the world's most advanced mobile platform. The Qualcomm® Snapdragon™ 888 completely redefines premium processing standards with its Adreno™ 660 GPU, 6th generation Qualcomm® AI engine and X60 modem – blending AI technology with lightning fast 5G connectivity.

Mi 11 is available in Anti-glare frosted glass: Midnight Gray, Horizon Blue, and Frost White colour variants. It is available across authorized Mi Stores, online and retail partners. Mi 11 with 8GB+256GB is Rs. 89,999

Everest Bank ties up with Shpun Remit, UK for remittance services

Everest Bank Limited has signed an agreement with a UK based online money transfer operator for inward remittance services from UK to Nepal. The agreement was jointly signed by Assistant General Manager of the Bank, Ashutosh Sharma and MD of the company, Wahidollah Safi.

Shpun Remit is a registered online product and trading name for M A Fastmove Limited which is available on web as well as mobile application in both Android and IOS devices. Any remitters in UK registering themselves with Shpun Remit will be able to send remittance to Nepal through Everest Remit. The remittance received from Shpun Remit will be available for payment as bank deposit to

any bank in Nepal in real time 24/7 and as cash pick up from more than 9000 payout agents all over Nepal including 103 branches of the Bank.

ADA joins hand with Outreach to offer data-driven marketing in Nepal



ADA partners with Outreach Nepal to introduce data-driven marketing practices in Nepal to both global and local brands. Operating predominantly in South and South-East Asia, ADA is a data driven integrated digital marketing solution provider that designs and executes comprehensive digital campaigns for a wide variety of brands. With their substantial data-driven approach ADA offers their digital expertise to more than 375 million consumers. The collaboration with Outreach Nepal aims to provide clients with meticulous solutions to new challenges.

Outreach Nepal is the most awarded advertising and communication agency in Nepal, creating innovative and distinct advertising campaigns for a broad range of corporate brands and development sectors since 2003. Outreach is 3-time finalists at the “Campaign South Asia Independent Agency of the Year” and is the sole winner for Nepal in the year 2016. It has also won multiple awards at many global forums. The agency has a proven track record of producing and facilitating creative ideas and strategic inputs to help many global brands to launch successfully in the Nepali market.

With this partnership, the team at Outreach will be equipped to provide their clients with a series of extended services. Business insights, data enrichment, and

advanced analytics will help the clients to understand the consumer mindset and design data-driven creative marketing strategies. The partnership will enable end-to-end digital marketing solutions for growth hacking, funnel and goal optimisation.

Speaking on this partnership, Managing Director of ADA in Bangladesh, Ashraf Haque said, “I believe this association with Outreach Nepal will be a giant leap towards providing unique data and analytics driven solutions to our prospective clients in Nepal. It widens our horizons as an organisation and cements our vision to go far and beyond when it comes to ensuring data-based business solutions.”

Ujaya Shakya, Founder Managing Director of Outreach Nepal said, “We have partnered with ADA to witness a new and dynamic data driven strategic approach, which would adapt global marketing way forwards for the brands and help achieve realistic business goals. This will also help to attract younger minds to our business of advertising which is now getting more digital-savvy”

ADA is a data and artificial intelligence company that designs and executes integrated digital, analytics, and marketing solutions.

Operating across 10 markets in South and Southeast Asia, ADA partners with leading brands to drive their digital and data maturity, and achieve their business goals. ADA complements its unique digital expertise with deep proprietary data of 375 Million consumers.

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Nepalgunj: 081-550427, 9802572200, 9802546482, 9802546481, Pokhara: 061-537426, 9801201010, 9801240155

Laxmi InterContinental Pvt. Ltd.

(An ISO 9001:2015 Certified Company) an entity of Laxmi Group Nepal

Nimbus donates over 10 lakh masks to support centers in their fight against Covid 19.



Pro-Tect

Nimbus has provided masks and sanitizers to numerous organisations, frontline workers, and volunteers who are working tirelessly to assist people in need during the Covid 19 crisis. The company has supplied over 10 lakh masks and sanitizers to 172 locations in Nepal and over 50 organisations, emphasising hospitals, quarantine facilities and frontline workers such as health professionals and volunteers.

"In one of the toughest challenges faced by the world today, we can only win if we all work unitedly. We strive to collaborate with different organisations and the government to fight this crisis and reach out to the underprivileged and deprived," shared Anand Bagaria, Managing Director of Nimbus.

Pro-Tect, a health and sanitation subsidiary brand of Nimbus, caters to hygiene and sanitation demands, and produces high-quality 3-ply protective masks and hand sanitizers based on WHO-recommended hand-rub formulations with 76% ethanol.

Organisations and volunteers can request Pro-Tect masks and sanitizer by visiting www.nimbusbazar.com and clicking on Donate Pro-Tect, or by calling 977-9828091691.

Online nomination of ICT Award 2021 started

The online nomination/application of the sixth edition of the ICT Award, established as a prestigious award in the field of Information and Communication Technology, has started from June 22. Award nominations in 11 different categories have been opened for the ICT Award 2021 organised by Living with ICT and in collaboration with various government and private organisations.

There are more than two dozen jury and advisors for the ICT Award selection process. Interested individuals, companies, products or organisations in 11 different categories can apply till Shrawan 16. Competitors themselves or anyone else can register online nominations for the award. In order to be nominated for the award, an individual needs to go to the ictaward.org website and select the relevant category and fill the form. This year, to make the selection process of the award more systematic and fairer, a jury team of more than 12 individuals will select the winner in different stages conducting different selection process across three months. After three rounds of selection in Startup, Product, Student Star Innovation category, public voting will be conducted by declaring the top 5. Similarly, in the other genres, four different stages of virtual selection and field visit will be conducted.

Hyundai Nepal to launch new SUV Palisade



Laxmi Intercontinental, sole authorised distributor of Hyundai Vehicles for Nepal, is planning to launch its new premium SUV Palisade in Nepal.

Hyundai Palisade is expected to come with 2.2 litre diesel engine options which generates 200 PS power and 1750 -2750 rpm torque. Palisade is the flagship car of Hyundai. This SUV has the powerful engine, premium features and muscular SUV stance.

The price of Palisade is expected to start at Rs. 2 crores. Laxmi Intercontinental is planning to bring two variants with diesel option.

Glocal Teen Hero opens application for its 7th edition

Glocal has announced the application opening of WaiWai Glocal Teen Hero Nepal for the year 2021. The application for participation and nomination are both available online.

Glocal Teen Hero (GTH) is an initiation of Glocal, a business enterprise working in the areas of training, education, and skilling that offers a platform exclusively for teenagers to share their initiation, creativity, and enthusiasm to foster innovative reasoning.

This is the 7th year of the first ever program designed in the country to recognise dedicated, passionate, and innovative teenagers so as to encourage their initiatives. Glocal Teen Hero began in Nepal in 2015 and aims to take Glocal Teen Hero to all the South Asian Countries. India and Sri Lanka now host the Glocal Teen Hero franchise respectively.

Amidst the second wave of Covid 19 in Nepal, Glocal Teen Hero is all set to go virtual this year. Keeping the program's momentum and embracing the era of digital proficiencies all the Glocal Teen Hero selection process to the awarding ceremony shall be done virtually.

Glocal Teen Hero is a fully funded program where teenagers from Nepal ages 13 to 19 can apply via online: <https://nepal.glocalteenhero.com>.

The deadline for the submission of the application is July 30.

Toastmasters in Nepal celebrates Virtual Citation 2021

Toastmasters in Nepal is quickly becoming the largest professional organisation in Nepal that fosters a safe and supportive environment to learn public speaking and leadership skills. Nepal (www.toastmastersnepal.org), which is part of District 41 of Toastmasters International,

celebrated Virtual Citation, the annual extravaganza amidst 300 participants on June 19.

During Citation, the three Division Directors presented their achievements and honored the Toastmaster of the Year to Neil Pande (Division A), Subrath Poudel (Division N) and Kumar Thapa (Division O). Toastmasters in Nepal who won the District contests for the past two years were also honoured.

AAN celebrated Ad-Day with Blood Donation



Advertising Association of Nepal (AAN) celebrated Ad-Day as Nepali Bigyapan Saptaaha from Jestha 30 to Ashadh 7. Ad- Day is sponsored by Bizmandu and co-sponsored by Ambe steel. AAN marked the 31st anniversary by organising a blood donation program at its office premises in Shantinagar, Kathmandu on June 13 in association with Nepal Medicit Hospital. AAN's executive committee, general members and stakeholders of the advertising industry, media personnel attended the event. 48 pints of blood was donated.

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The Nokia C20 - stunning and reliable Finnish quality for under 11,000



HMD Global, the home of Nokia phones, has announced the newest C-series smartphone – Nokia C20. With Nordic design and build-quality, all-day battery life¹, Android 11TM (Go edition) and security updates– all for under 11,000. Representing one of three distinct smartphone series to be introduced (X-Series, G-Series and C-Series), the Nokia C20 makes smartphone technology more accessible. It also gives consumers peace of mind thanks to its ultra-high value price point and two years of free security updates as standard.

When it comes to precious moments with loved ones, blink, and you'll miss them. But with a5MP front and rear camera, you don't have to worry about missing one again – even in low light. A front and rear LED flash means that you can capture those important moments from dawn till dusk, making your pictures and selfies shine bright.

Combining a 3000mAh² battery with a big, 6.5" HD+ screen means you can entertain the whole family all day, without battery anxiety– just plug into a podcast, pop on a classic film or listen to your favourite tunes.

Spend more time speaking to those you love. With fast 4G, you can keep in touch

with family on facetime, even on the move. With its Octa-core processor and the latest operating system, you can rely on C20 to get things done swiftly.

A dependable phone needs an operating system you can rely on every day. Android 11 (Go edition) makes it faster and easier for you to open apps and store, find and share photos and videos. With security updates for two years and added security features, you can also rest assured that everything on your phone is being kept safe.

As you would expect from Nordic design, the C20 doesn't just look sleek, it's also built from quality materials, so it will stand the test of time. The strong, polycarbonate body - in Sand and Dark Blue colour options - make for an attractive offering you won't want to let go. The Nokia C20 comes in 2/32GB configurations starting at Rs.10,999.

TVS NTORQ 125 crosses the one lakh sales milestone in international markets

TVS Motor Company, a reputed two-wheeler and three-wheeler manufacturer globally, announced that the TVS NTORQ 125, its sporty, Bluetooth connected scooter, has crossed the sales milestone of one lakh units in international markets.

In 2018, TVS NTORQ 125 was launched as the first Bluetooth connected scooter in India and has since secured its place like no other. Over the years, the brand has become synonymous with industry-first technology, unrivalled style and superior performance in select international markets. Today, TVS NTORQ 125 is present in 19 countries across South Asia, Latin America, Middle East, and ASEAN.

KN Radhakrishnan, Director & CEO, TVS Motor Company, said, "We are delighted that our smart scooter, TVS NTORQ 125, has achieved the one lakh sales milestone in international markets. Since its launch, the

scooter has become a favourite among Gen Z customers globally. The scooter's striking appearance, connected technology and superior performance have been a hallmark of the TVS NTORQ 125 brand experience. This achievement is a reinforcement of our commitment to grow the TVS NTORQ brand by setting benchmarks in innovation and creating aspiration for customers."

TVS NTORQ 125 boasts of superior performance backed by TVS Racing Pedigree and is the first scooter to be equipped with Race-Tuned Fuel Injection (RT-Fi). It premieres the TVS SmartXconnect*, an innovative Bluetooth-enabled technology paired to an exclusive TVS Connect mobile App. TVS SmartXconnect* enables a host of first-in-segment additions to the fully digital speedometer, which boasts features such as navigation assist, top speed recorder, in-built lap-timer, phone-battery strength display,

last parked location assist, service reminder, trip meter and multi-ride statistic modes such as Street and Sport.







In Nepal, TVS Ntorq 125 was first launched at the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) Autoshow in 2018. Ever since, it has been the first choice of Nepali customers as it was designed for the youth and the scooter had been developed based on the TVS Racing pedigree and came with the state-of-the-art CVTi-REVV3 Valve engine. This scooter also marked the launch of an exclusive technology platform-TV SmartXconnect-making it a connected scooter.

Shahil Agrawal, MD Jagdamba Motors said that the launch of TVS Ntorq 125 Race edition that the scooter has become an immediate favourite and he is sure that the Race Edition will satisfy customers seeking an element of thrill and wanting more from the scooter.

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Khalti's contribution in digitising and empowering women-led businesses



In collaboration with UNCDF and UNESCAP, Khalti has been empowering and digitising women-led Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through training and workshops. Its major purpose has been to make women financially more independent.

"It was an honor to make our little contribution in empowering and digitising women-led businesses. We believe our training will help them to promote their sales more efficiently and grow their business" said Project Co-ordinator of Khalti Digital Wallet, Prabhat Kumar Jha adding, "We have also introduced MSMEs to Khalti's hyper-local marketplace i.e. Khalti bazaar. It provides free digital marketing of their services and products for increasing their sales".

To boost this program, collaborating with banks, Khalti has been helping many women create a bank account at zero cost. The idea of conducting a digital financial literacy training program has made women-led enterprises understand the scope of receiving digital payment. To make smooth payment, Khalti has also been providing bulk payment service enabling bulk transfers from the women MSME accounts to their individual bank. Khalti is also providing up to 4% cash back on every top-up, Khalti QRs for free, and 500 SMS to promote their business.

Upaya City Cargo delivers Oxygen during crisis for free



Nepal is facing one of the biggest healthcare crisis due to the Covid 19 global pandemic. The month of May saw record number of cases and death toll since the start of the pandemic. In addition, hospitals ran out of capacity and there was a huge shortage of oxygen cylinders around the country. There

was numerous ongoing efforts from the government, private sector, and other organisations to meet the increasing demand of oxygen cylinders in Nepal. To aid in the process of smooth and timely delivery of this extremely essential item, Upaya City Cargo decided to provide delivery vehicles free of cost to transport oxygen cylinders for individuals in need. This service was available within Kathmandu Valley, Pokhara, and Butwal - Bhairahawa regions.

Upaya City Cargo is an online marketplace for intra-city logistics that connects individuals and businesses with our pickup driver partners and integrates technology to ensure quick and hassle-free delivery of bulk goods.

Upaya City Cargo has been offering logistics solutions for the last two years. Today, Upaya City Cargo serves over 6000 clients through Upaya City Cargo's network of 1500 four-wheeler driver-partners. With the recent addition of two-wheeler vehicles, Upaya City Cargo serve as a fully tech-enabled last mile delivery platform. Upaya City Cargo's vision is to become the logistics backbone of Digital Nepal. As of May 21st, Upaya has done almost 100 trips utilising around 20 vehicles to deliver 500+ oxygen cylinders.

NATTA expresses concern over RT-PCR report requirement with photo identification

About the new standards of passenger arrival to Nepal, NATTA expresses its deep concern regarding the recent notice of negative RT-PCR Report with photo identification issued by the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN). The standard rule of passengers having the negative RT-PCR report with their photo identification in the report appears over-going. In foreign countries, there is no provision of providing the PCR Report with photo identification and such rules may complicate and dissuade travelers wanting to visit Nepal due to the extended rule. Likewise, in the given standard, there is no ease mentioned for fully vaccinated travellers.

NATTA demands that the government ease standards for travellers who are willing to travel to Nepal with only negative RT-PCR report within 72 hours and no compulsion of quarantine for the fully vaccinated travellers (Nepalese/ Foreigner).

WHO Nepal refutes incorrect claims of approving mix and match regimen of vaccines

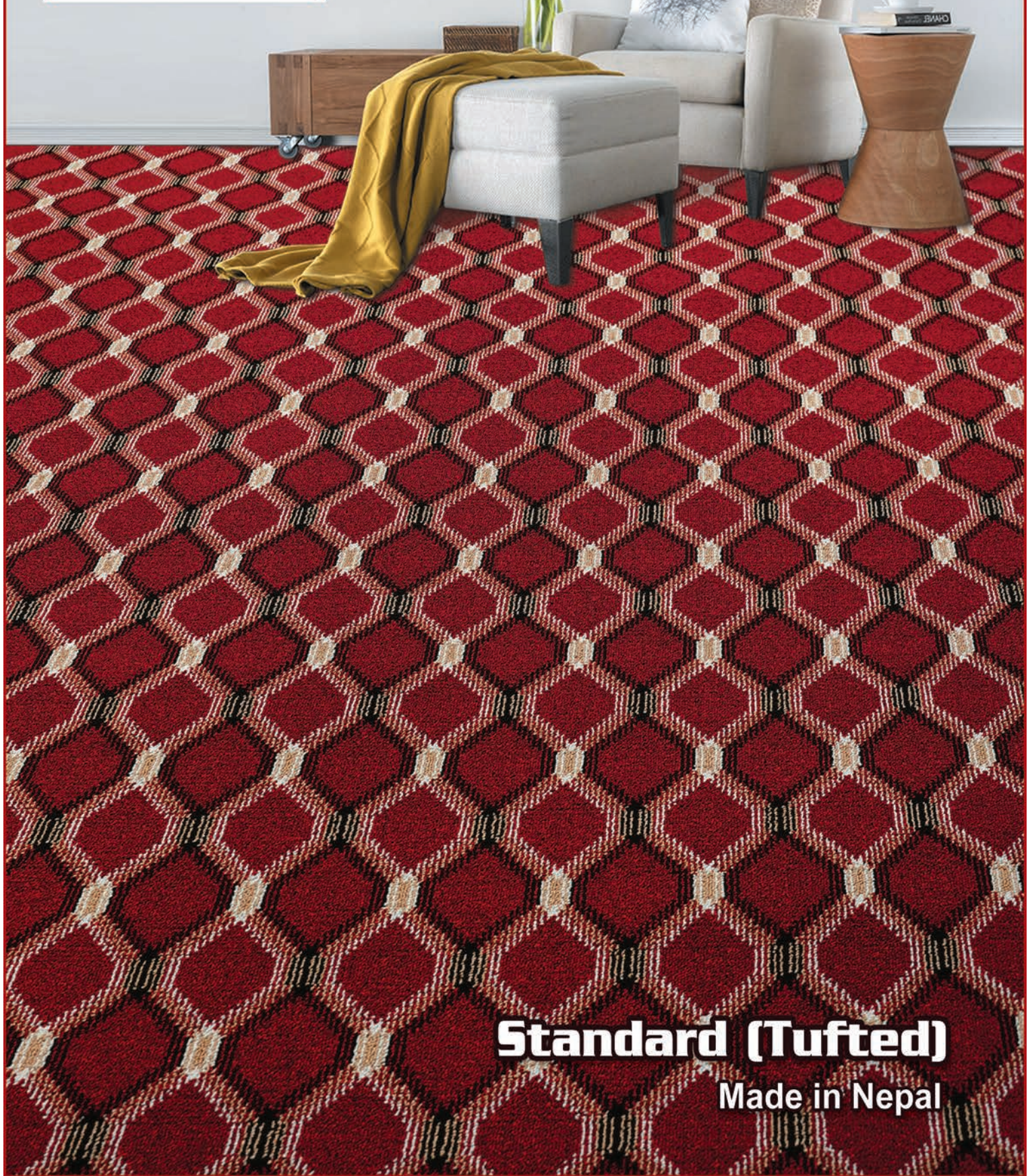
WHO Nepal wishes to refute incorrect claims that the World Health Organization (WHO) has approved of a 'mix and match' regimen for Vero Cell and

AstraZeneca Covishield vaccine citing more effective results. WHO has not issued any such statements and the attribution is false. Such misinformation can lead to grave consequences for the public. Data on the efficacy of the 'mix and match' of vaccines remains limited. While studies are ongoing regarding the interchangeability between vaccines, more evidence is needed on the interchangeability of a second dose of AstraZeneca with Vero Cell vaccine before conclusions can be made.

Arun Kumar Chaudhary appointed as Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Hungary

The Government of Nepal has formally recognised Arun Kumar Chaudhary as Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Hungary as per the Consular Commission granted by H.E. Peter Szijarto, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Hungary on February 17.

Dr. Durga Bahadur Subedi Chettri, Chief of Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal handed over the exequatur to Chaudhary on his appointment. Arun Chaudhary, Chairman and Managing Director of CGJ Holdings, a prominent multi-conglomerate business house of Nepal expressed his commitment to promoting the Nepal-Hungary relation in multiple areas in the coming days.



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“WE HAVE A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF RAW RESOURCES AND ONE OF THE YOUNGEST POPULATIONS IN THE WORLD AND STARTUPS CAN BE A BRIDGE TO BRING THEM TOGETHER FOR GOOD”



Chewan Rai

Co-founder, Metrokheti.com

Born in the Eastern Hills of Bhojpur and raised by his grandparents in different parts of Nepal, Rai is an enterprise development enthusiast, policy advocate and a thinker. He holds a degree in Law and Business.

Rai is the Co-founder of Metrokheti.com, a pioneer in urban farming in Nepal. He is the Founding Chairperson of Kalapas Biotech which is Nepal's largest plant tissue culture lab. He is also the founder of Che&Co, a start-up guidance firm based in Kathmandu.

He started his entrepreneurial journey as a street side jeans seller when he was just 14. Currently, he has investment portfolios in sectors like, food production, real estate, IT, apparel, agriculture, and security.

Business aside, he is a passionate social service volunteer. He is the Co-founder of Youth Thinkers' Society, one of the largest non-profit organisation working in the field of youth engagement in

policy research and advocacy. He is also the Co-founder of Everest International Model United Nations, a premier diplomatic simulation conference in Asia. He has also served as a civil society advisor for UN Women, Nepal.

In this edition of Business 360, Rai shares his pick of top brands and what he has learnt from some of them. Excerpts:

3 brands/people/campaigns that you have learnt something from

- Mumaji - Knowledge is your greatest asset.
- Elon Musk - Investing in the future.
- Goldstar Shoes - Adaptation.

Your work philosophy

Respect the process, be goal driven and time bound - be productive, not busy necessarily - and enjoy

4 apps that you use the most

- Mindly for mind mapping
- Youtube
- DuckDuckGo for browsing
- Facebook Messenger

3 destinations within Nepal you want to travel to

- Barun Valley
- Dolpo
- Bardiya

4 women-run businesses you think deserve accolades

- SOCHAI - Bonita and Team
- Greenspace Nepal - Shanti and Team
- Aji's - Lorina and Team
- Smart Paani - Sajal and Team

5 entrepreneurs who inspire you constantly

- Muma ji Ram Kumari Rai, my first teacher.
- Street side vendors, tea sellers and corn sellers in Kathmandu
- Mahabir Pun
- Madan Rai
- Anup Ghimire

A nonprofit you want to contribute to

Political Literacy for Women

The best work advice you have received

Decide only when you have a calm mind – Muma ji

4 Nepali startups you think deserve the spotlight

- Best Mad Honey
- Yatri Motorcycles
- Metrokheti.com
- Anthropose

2 Nepali companies whose PR strategies are spot-on

- Viewfinders
- eSewa

If you could change ONE thing about the present entrepreneurial scene in Nepal, what would that be?

Ensure access to finance for startups based on their business and traction.

Five words to encapsulate you

Calm, crazy thinker, living in the present, time thief, a walking paradox

Who among the Nepali and international influencers do you want to work with?

Elon Musk
Mahabir Pun

3 things patrons can do to promote local businesses

- Invest in local businesses
- Provide mentorship
- Lobby for policy reforms

4 things businesses can do to pull themselves up from the abysmal effects of the Covid 19 pandemic

- Audit their business for operational efficiency and optimise where needed.
- Go digital
- Rethink their budget based on the circumstances - reduce, reallocate
- Communicate more with the customers - good PR campaign

2 things the government can do to help startups pull through the Covid 19 crisis

- Subsidise rent
- Assist in accessing finances
- Tax break
- Start a designated startup area

2 Nepali startups you want to collaborate with

- Yatri Motorcycles
- Bugv

Complete the sentence: Startups are important for a country like Nepal because ...

- We have a tremendous amount of raw resources and one of the youngest populations in the world and startups can be a bridge to bring them together for good.
- We sit between two of the largest countries in terms of populations (market/consumers) to market our goods. **B**

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SWEAT IT OUT



CHALLENGING, HAPPY AND FUN WORKOUTS WHETHER DONE ON AN INDIVIDUAL LEVEL OR AS A GROUP WILL CONTINUE TO DELIVER RESULTS, WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS THAT YOU SHOW UP AND STAY ON TRACK.



Sandesh Palungwa Limbu, Certified professional fitness instructor, founder of RAGE Fitness, and specialises in mixed martial arts.

Extolling the benefits of exercise is second nature to me. I cannot stress enough how important it is to lead an active life and especially make the time for at least 30-45 minutes of exercise 4-5 times a week. If you can't do it all at once, break it down and get three 15 minute

exercise slots through a day. Your body, mind and spirit will thank you for this as the years catch up. In this article, I want to touch upon some trends that make you sweat your way to a healthy, fitter and stronger you.

- High Intensity Interval Training workouts have a large and devoted following across the globe. We see a number of variations to HIIT with short 30 minute formats becoming increasingly popular. People love that they are getting shorter, more intense workouts.
- Fusion workouts are also getting popular as variety holds the key for long term exercise success. Combining a variety of different modalities such as boxing, yoga, strength training, cycling in one workout is

found to be more appealing.

- Group fitness classes have been all the rage across the years. Group coaching is also more in demand where the instructors guide and coach a workout rather than just ask participants to follow along. Qualified instructors are now designing workouts specific to the participants of the group.
- With an overload of technology in our everyday lives, more fitness consumers are moving away from tech and prefer to come to gyms and studios, or even exercise outdoors. At the gym, barbells, kettlebells and medicine balls continue to be put to good use. Increasingly, more people are using smaller equipment such as foam rollers, bands, sliders

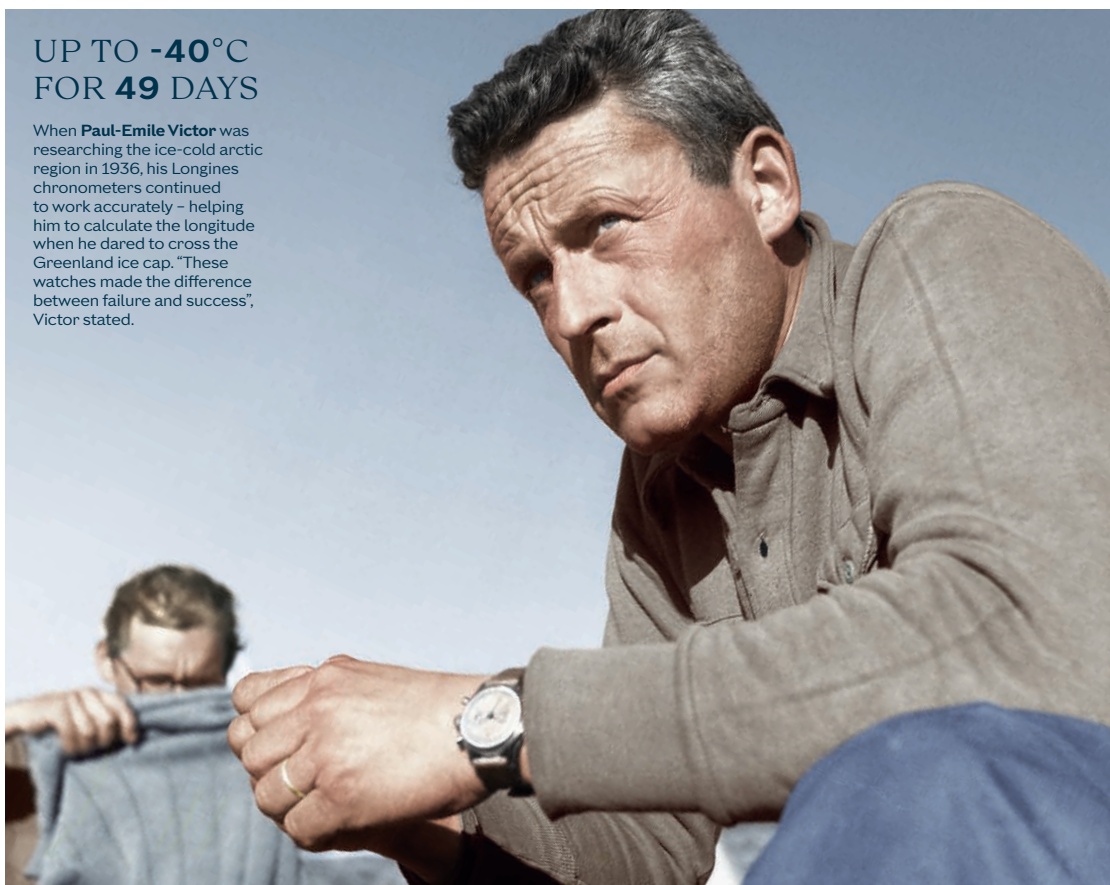
and gliders. There's also a huge shift back to strength training machines and free weights.

- Meditation is gaining huge acceptance and practice as people understand the mind-body connection. Nutrition and wellbeing is being viewed as essential components of health.

Challenging, happy and fun workouts whether done on an individual level or as a group will continue to deliver results, what's important is that you show up and stay on track. **B**

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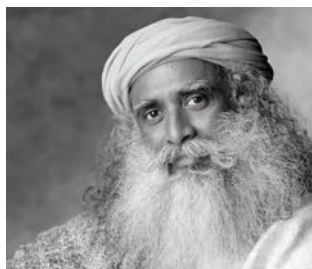
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BUSINESS DURING A SLOWDOWN



Sadhguru. Named one of 50 most influential people, Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, bestselling author & poet. Sadhguru has been conferred the “Padma Vibhushan” by the Government of India in 2017, the highest civilian award of the year, accorded for exceptional and distinguished service.

Rest and Retrain

Q: Sadhguru, you wrote that “If you have money in your pocket, it is great. Only if it enters your head, it becomes a perversion.” Right now, there is a real fear that money is not even coming into our pocket. What do we do in times like these?

Sadhguru: The money is still going into someone’s pocket, though that maybe not the kind of pocket that will use it to create wellbeing and wealth for humanity at large.

When there is a certain slowdown, it hurts because you have prepared yourself in terms of people and material for a certain speed. Suddenly, when there is slowdown, you have an excess capacity and not enough to do. When such a thing happens, normally most companies in the world go for retrenchment. They want to cut down their staff. There is a difference between cutting down on your stock of material and cutting down on people who work for you. Modern management tends to treat both the same way.

I would say there is a different way to approach this. Instead of laying off people, why not sit down with them and let them take

a cut on their salary and use the saved amount to retrain them into a new possibility? There may be a slowdown in your current field of activity but there are definitely other opportunities. You can use such a time to retrain yourself and people around you and retool everything. If instead of looking at it as a recession you look at it as a period of rest, after a while you could come back into activity with much more vigour. Rest is the basis of all activity. If the business is getting a little bit of rest, it could be a phenomenal advantage; unless the rest lasts for too long.

In the present situation, the rest will not last for too long because businesses are not limited to geographical boundaries. People can always rejig themselves and move to other areas where they could function better. There are many possibilities. But fundamentally, instead of cutting back on human resources, we can approach them in a friendly manner, ask them to share the burden and keep their colleagues with them. That way, you can pass through this period of rest with a certain level of bonding and togetherness and be ready for the next level of action.

Innovating during a Crisis

Q: Although many business leaders are very focused right now on resolving current issues and minimising damages and losses, there are many entrepreneurs who are keeping their eyes slightly higher and seeking new opportunities. Can you predict two new industry of businesses that will emerge because of this pandemic crisis?

Sadhguru: One unfortunate development could be that arms and ammunition sales go up tremendously because those who are doing

well would like to protect what they have. It has happened in the United States. In California, gun sales have gone up heavily because of the virus. They are buying guns because now they understand when people have nothing to eat, they may enter your homes and grab whatever little you have. These situations could happen between societies and nations. I hope it does not go there, but that is one possible immediate development.

The agro-related industry could also take off in a big way because once people taste a little bit of food scarcity, they will become very conscious about how food should be organised. Let us say, every family in the country went without food just for one day – you saw your children without food for just a single day. Suppose even if you had the money, there was no food in the market. If that happened, you will see that the food industry will become very important, not necessarily in terms of processing and packaging. Agriculture and agro-based related activities could become crucial which is a very positive step the world, because only when that happens will people stay on the land; otherwise they will try to move somewhere else.

Technology could also become very big because right now everyone is talking about working from home. I think those who go through a phase of working from home for six months, once they overcome whatever domestic troubles they have, will not want to go back to the office. They will enjoy working from home on their own time, in their own way, while probably being more productive than going to the office. And in most cities, particularly in India, commuting to work is quite

a daily circus. It is not joke; it needs enormous skill just to get from one place to another. Three hours back and forth on a polluted street, breathing in everyone’s exhaust smoke. So once people understand the peace and quiet from which they can work, technology and telecommunications will become very important.

Another important sector which could get seriously disrupted, apart from tourism – which may come back after some time – is education. If people are in education as a business, this could go for a big toss. This whole idea of children or students congregating in one building to learn something may completely evaporate. Fundamentally, transmission of information is all that is largely happening in educational institutions. With the advent of artificial intelligence, this kind of education has already been on the way out. But the virus has brought haste to that process. So, for the education industry to change in a massive way, we will have to do significant innovation. For that also, we will need bandwidth – data delivery, telecommunications and technology. I feel there is going to be a massive upsurge for those who are in that segment of business; the next five years’ time could see anywhere between 500 to 1000 percent growth. Because if you want to deliver education and various services on technological platforms, you will definitely need a tenfold growth to make it happen. **B**



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DR. KEYOOR GAUTAM
CHAIRMAN, SAMYAK DIAGNOSTIC

Dr. Keyoor Gautam is a pathologist and the Chairman of Samyak Diagnostic Pvt. Ltd. He acquired his MBBS degree from Saint Louis University, Philippines and completed his MD in Pathology from Kasturba Medical College, India under the post graduate program from Kathmandu University. He has further specialised in Oncopathology from Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, India.

Dr. Keyoor's career as a pathologist spans more than a decade and started with the Nepal Medical College. He joined Grande International Hospital in 2012 as the Head of Department of Pathology and helped establish its laboratory system. With a vision to provide quality laboratory service in the country, he established Samyak Diagnostic in 2014 as a benchmark of a modern pathology lab. Under his leadership, Samyak Diagnostic became Nepal's first ISO 15189 accredited pathology laboratory.

He is an international faculty for the Foundation for Quality India (FQI) and has trained many laboratory professionals. He has worked as a quality consultant at

NPHL (National Public Health Laboratory) for ISO 5189 accreditation of the national lab and has helped establish six local level laboratories in Rukum district. He was also involved in establishing the pathology lab of Nepal Police Hospital. Dr Keyoor and his venture have played a vital role in helping AERSSC, the local accreditation body of Nepal, in achieving MRA signatory status of International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation which has led to international recognition of lab reports released from ISO 15189 accredited pathology lab from Nepal.

In an email interview with B360, he shares his definition of leadership and why the establishment of Samyak Diagnostic remains his most prized accomplishment till date.

What's your definition of a leader?

A leader is a person who is a visionary and passionate about his or her work and can lead the group to achieve higher goals as a team for the benefit of the institution as well as the team.

Is leadership 'in-born' or 'acquired'?

Our thought, perceptions and decisions are all based on our past experiences. Leadership may be little of an inherent quality but it is predominantly molded by our past experiences and triggered by certain circumstances or life situations that we experience. And yes, I believe that the majority of leaders are born as per the time demands.

Who comes to your mind as 'an ideal leader'?

I have found leadership in people from various walks of life. For me an ideal leader would be any person who is passionate in his or her work and will give one hundred percent in what is being done. All of us are ideal leaders in one way or another, just the scale of followership changes. You can be an ideal leader

at home to your family, or at your office, or in your country or globally too. It is just a matter of how passionate and committed you are towards your ambition and dream.

Could you share with us any incident that tested your leadership ability?

Three major challenges we Nepalis faced in the last decade was the earthquake and blockade in 2015, and then the Covid 19 crisis in late March, 2020. Being in the health sector, we had to close our service for just one week after the earthquake and for only five days during the initial lockdown last year due to Covid infection.

2015 posed as a major challenge for me and the company. We were a new

the organisation paid them full salary even though they worked half of the allocated time. This was actually a motivating factor for the staff and it has helped Samyak gain a good reputation as an institution where the staff come first. Happy workers are productive workers.

Two major problems were faced during the blockade, one was petroleum shortage with frequent power cuts and another one was financial constraints once again since our priorities had shifted with wellness and health care becoming secondary.

Covid 19 crisis in early 2020 was a plunge into the unknown. I still remember that we had to open on the fifth day of lockdown after I got a few calls from some recent renal

as well as patients comfortable when they came for tests. My persistence and commitment at work must have motivated all my staff and colleagues. As far as the finances were concerned, it was a challenge, and this challenge was taken as an opportunity. We were compelled to think and work on various modalities of marketing and business promotion. This helped us to spring back within a few months of the end of crisis time.

Lesson learnt was that every situation, whether good or bad, can be taken as an opportunity to do better or as an opportunity to learn from. Since we as an organization survived these turmoil filled times, our confidence level is higher than ever that we can tackle any crisis and get back in no time.

How important is it for a leader to have a good team to work with?

Nothing is possible without good team work. But just having a team is not enough. A leader must know the qualities of all the team members and assign them work as per their capabilities and expertise. A leader should have the ability to spot the good in everyone and make the most utilization of it for the betterment of the institution as well as to sharpen the skills of that team member. Frequent appraisals and a simple thank you will help in any job well done. A leader should also have the ability to learn from his team, whether it may be from a fresher or a senior team member. This openness to learn and discuss will bring out the best in them.

When should leaders hand-over the leadership position?

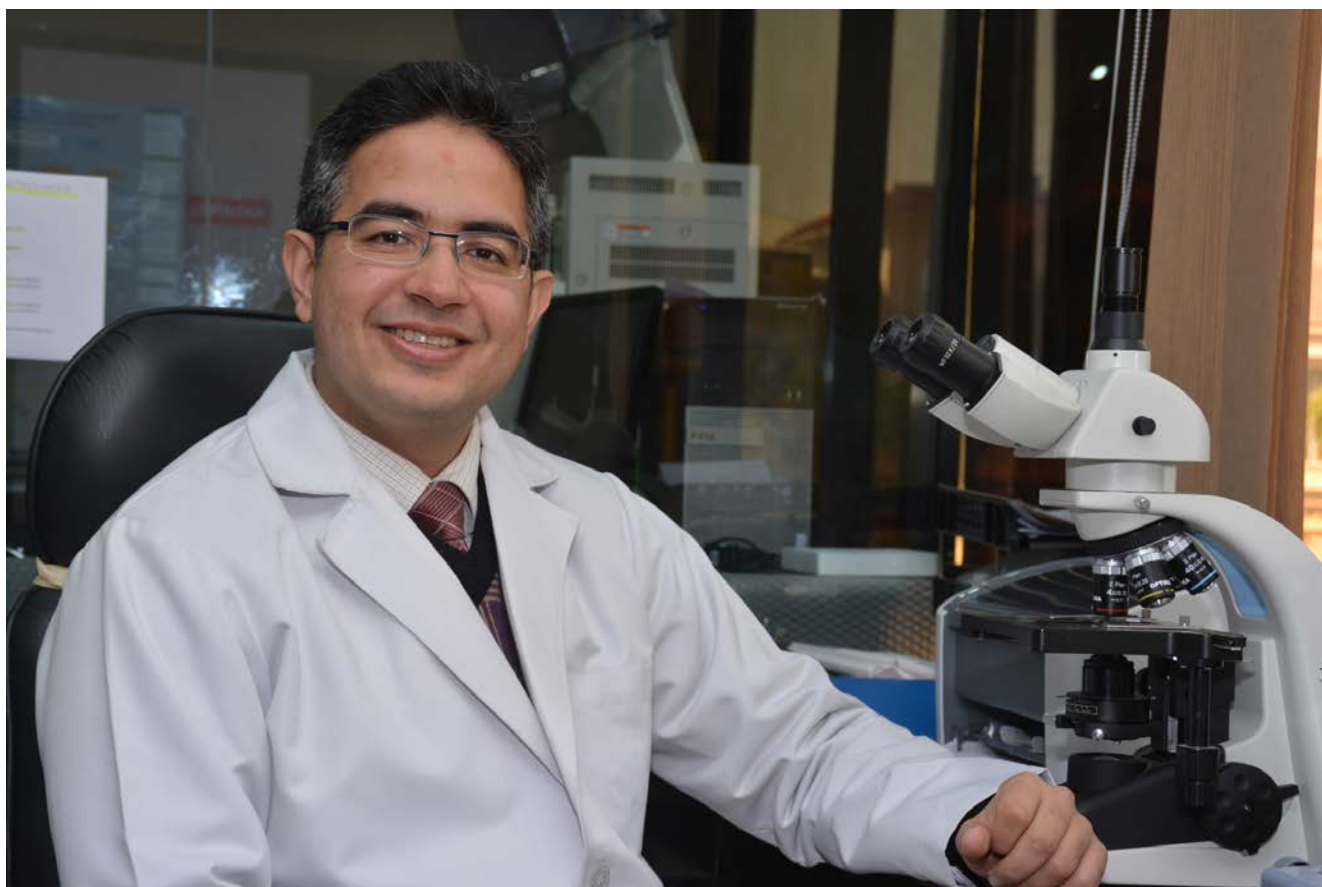
In reality leadership position is handed over if the leader plans to retire due to various conditions, sees another opportunity where he feels like he can do a better job, or feels that his successor can do a better job in leading the organization. It is a gut feeling

A GOOD LEADER SHOULD FIRST BECOME A GOOD PERSON. IT ALSO TEACHES US ABOUT HOW PERSISTENCE, PASSION, EMPATHY AND LOVE FOR YOUR WORK WILL MAKE YOU A GOOD LEADER, AND A HAPPY ONE TOO.

company which had not even celebrated its first anniversary, and we were preparing for an International inspection for ISO 15189 accreditation. Essentially, we went through tough times. Challenges were everywhere and from all angles. Stress and anxiety among staff and financial crunches were the major issues faced after the earthquake. People's priority had changed and we faced financial crisis due to lack of regular testing by patients since they showed unwillingness to visit the hospitals. Problems had to be solved. We decreased our working hours to half day and had our staff join duty every alternate day. This helped decrease our overhead expenses and at the same time we provided alternative day rest to our staff so that they could spend some time with their loved ones. The best part is that

transplant patients who were on immunosuppressant drug and had to monitor their levels via blood tests. Now motivating the staff to enter the war zone was a challenge. Even if the team members were ready to come to work, their family pressure was high. As before, I cut down our working hours so that we could cater to patients in emergency, and then did alternate duty for the staff.

So as a leader, what must have helped me motivate them in these difficult times? Well, I have realised that a leader must lead the show, be with the team and carry them along. I made sure that I came to work every day, even on Saturdays. I used to stay at the lab the whole time from opening to closing time and made my staff



in any profession when you should make the decision to hand over the baton, and most good leaders know the right moment to do so.

A book on leadership that you want to recommend

“The Leader Who Had No Title” authored by Robin Sharma. A very simple book to read but with a lot of motivation for all of us who have the leadership within. As the title suggests, we do not need a position to lead. We can be leaders in many aspects of life. The book motivates us to do the best every day and make possible to better each day. It teaches us to inspire, influence and elevate each person and basically be a good human being through respect for others, kindness and appreciation.

A good leader should first become a good person. It also teaches us about how persistence, passion, empathy and love for your work will make you a good leader, and a happy one too.

What do you consider your most significant accomplishment as a leader?

Establishing Samyak Diagnostic, the first ISO 15189 accredited pathology laboratory in the country is the most significant accomplishment and contribution of mine to our society. Results released from an ISO 15189 accredited pathology laboratory will now be recognised in more than 80 developed countries worldwide. This has raised the standard of pathology laboratory service in the country and Samyak Diagnostic has served as a benchmark of quality and an ideal pathology laboratory.

Now treating doctors as well as patients are assured of an internationally recognised quality lab report from Nepal.

The story just doesn't end here. May it be for providing quality service to patients or as a sense of competition with us, the need for accreditation of pathology lab has been the talk of the town. More and more laboratories and doctors are asking for trainings on ISO 15189 and the process of accreditation. Whatever may be the reason for other labs to start thinking of accreditation, we Nepalis are the beneficiaries since we shall be provided with accurate and reliable quality results.

I am happy that my six years of being vocal and advocating laboratory accreditation is finally making progress for the good of all Nepalis.

Does gender affect leadership role?

Both men and women have been leaders in various disciplines. More men are seen as leaders early in life, but you must realise that a woman's full-fledged career starts a bit late, like in the early or mid-thirties due to family obligations. Family support for ladies is the key to help her exhibit the leadership qualities in her. Additionally, women are known to have more empathy and nurturing character in them, they will do a better job in both employee satisfaction as well as client satisfaction. Hence, I don't think that leadership role is affected by gender. **B**

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