

VOL 8 • ISSUE 6 • APRIL 2020 • RS 100

B^{360°} BUSINESS

**CORONAVIRUS
HITS FLAILING
ECONOMY HARD**

**OIL MARKETS:
REELING UNDER
TWIN EFFECTS**

**UNDERSTANDING
AND SAFEGUARDING
CONSUMER RIGHTS**

**DOCS,
PARAMEDICS
OUTSHINE ALL**

**COVID
19**

**IMPLICATIONS
FOR BUSINESS
IN NEPAL**

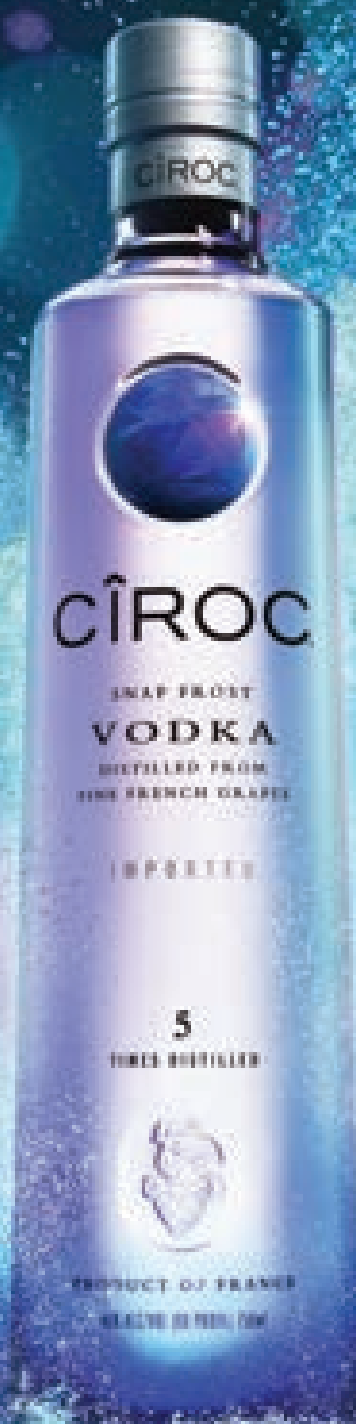


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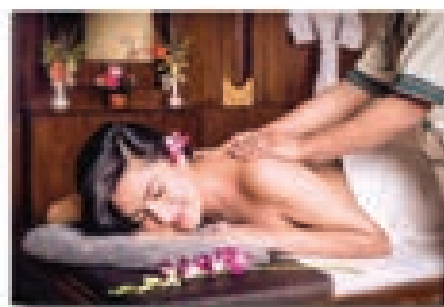
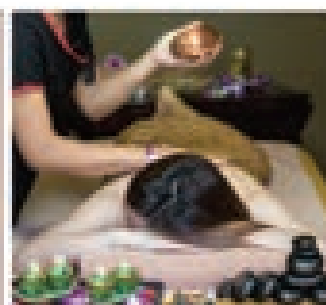
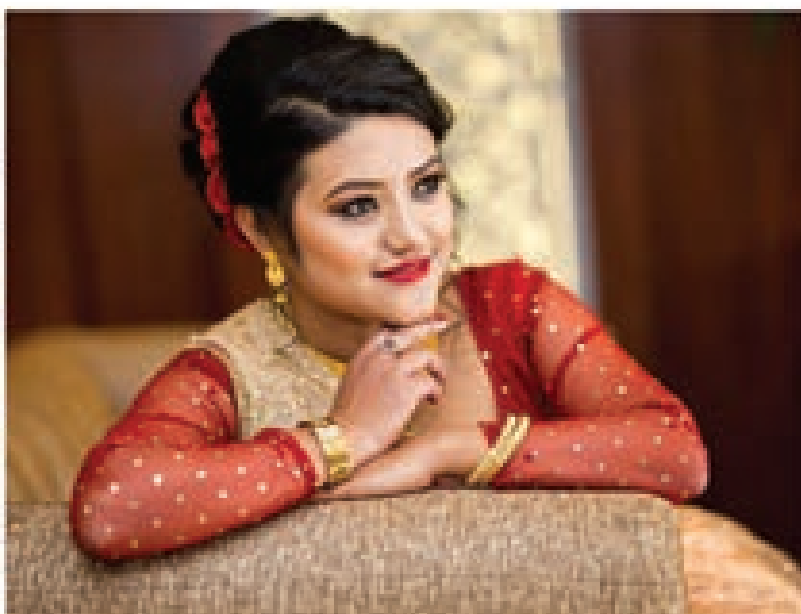
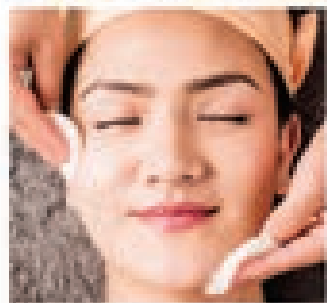
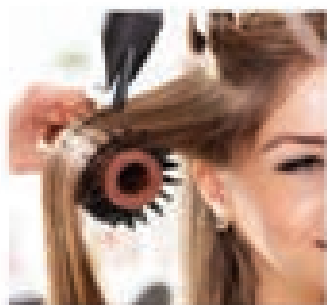
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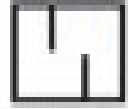
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Fighting an invisible force, the COVID 19 has brought the world to a stop as we know it. News headlines are about medical terms, exhausted medical personnel on the frontlines of the pandemic, fear and uncertainty among people, ill prepared health systems even in advanced economies, and governments at disarray.

Many of the news reports are heartbreaking and compel you to think about the fragility of human life. It has shaken established belief systems and forced populations to think about life and living in a very different way. The lockdown has brought to life the knowledge that if you die from the virus, you die alone. There is nothing beautiful about death anymore. You'll be dealt with professional care where you cannot even identify who is looking after you. Doctors, nurses and medical staff in PPE gear are putting their lives at stake to look after you; but among the multitude of afflicted, will you even register. And when you die, there is no one you love holding your hand. An end that is stark and devastating to those you leave behind. And among the living, COVID 19 has forced people to isolate and stay apart.

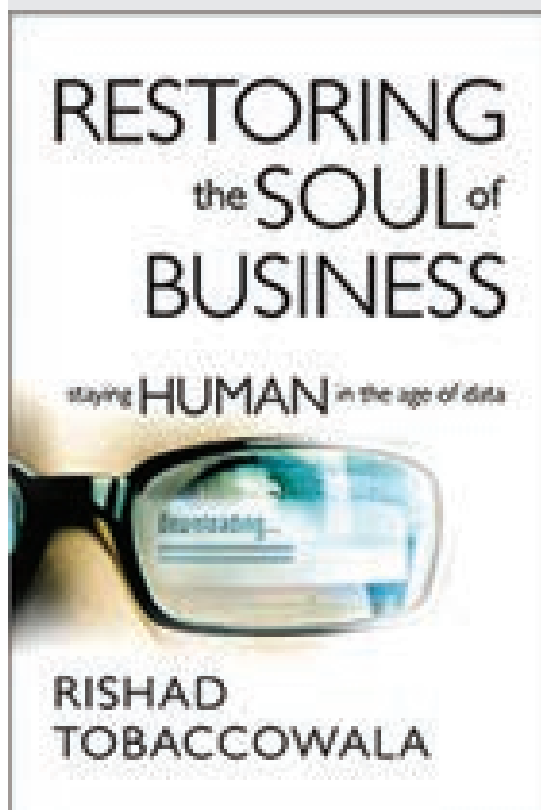
The lockdown makes me think of many things but honestly the market is not one of them. I know the anxiety of economics, of businesses that will not survive, of investors and markets that lay latent, the crisis of recovery, the ambiguity of time, unemployment, but in the face of this pandemic I question most the value of human life. And I think with trepidation what if the numbers in Nepal grow. We do not have either the expertise or the sophistication of infrastructure... what will this pandemic really cost us? Times like this bring out the best and worst in human beings, and I wonder where we failed when I read about the corruption.

Despite all that I hear around me, I know that the world is never going to be the same again. This is not just a war of strength and resilience, its goes deeper. It will change the world order, it will test character, it will change people at an intrinsic level, it will reset how we live our lives and where we put our energies, it will teach us about forces far greater than we know.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charu Chadha'.

Charu Chadha
editor

BOOK



The hidden key to successful transformation in any organization lies between human intuition and data-driven insights.

Named by Time as a top five marketing innovator, Rishad Tobaccowala draws on research and interviews, as well as over three decades of experience as a business and thought leader, to describe how digilog companies—ones where digital tools and analog people are integrated expertly—develop a hybrid consciousness and learn to be proactive when they see warning signs that human traits are being subordinated to technology and data only decisions.

Restoring the Soul of Business provides practical tools and techniques that every organization can and should implement, and challenges readers to move forward with the kind of balance that catalyses transformation and produces one great success after another.

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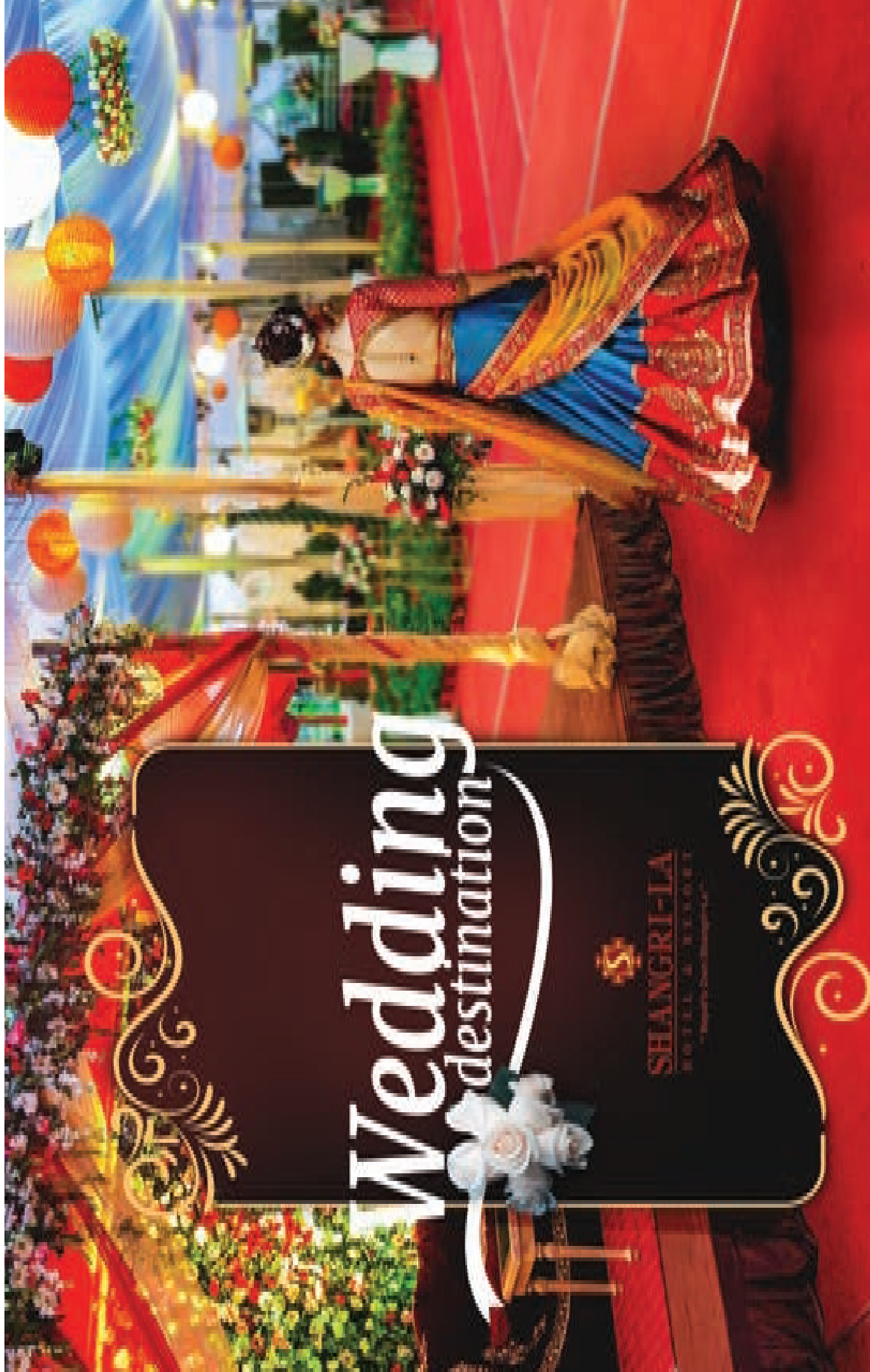


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LISA CHOEGYAL

WRITER, AUTHOR, CONSULTANT, NEW
ZEALAND HONORARY CONSULAR,
TOURISM SPECIALIST & ENTREPRENEUR



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COVID-19

IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS IN NEPAL
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SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT BE ALREADY CONSIDERING
AND SHOULD AN ECONOMIC RESPONSE TASKFORCE
NOT ALREADY BE IN PLACE?



OPINION

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“THE NEPALI GOVERNMENT HAS A CRUCIAL ROLE TO PLAY IF THE EXISTING CARPET COMPANIES ARE TO PROSPER. MOST COMPANIES THAT PRODUCE RUGS IN NEPAL CANNOT AFFORD TO PRESENT THEIR PRODUCTS TO THE REST OF THE WORLD THROUGH INTERNATIONAL FAIRS AND EXHIBITIONS. THE NEPALESE GOVERNMENT CAN TAKE A CUE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES LIKE MOROCCO THAT SUPPORT THE WEAVERS BY INVESTING IN PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES”.

Anne Tönsmann
Teppichhaus Tönsmann

ETC

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“THE AUTOMOTIVE PAINT MARKET IS VERY FRAGMENTED IN NEPAL. THE STUDY SAYS THE MARKET LIES BETWEEN 1.5 BILLION BUT WE ARE SURE IT IS MUCH BIGGER. ASSUMING THIS TO BE OUR FOCUS, WE ARE LOOKING AT 20% MARKET SHARE AND GROW GRADUALLY”

Sharad Malhotra
Senior Vice President, Nipsea Group

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Lisa Choegyal

**Writer, Author, Consultant, New Zealand Honorary Consular,
Tourism Specialist & Entrepreneur**

“We have done so much work on VNY. I think they are completely right to stop the overseas promotions but keep the momentum going within Nepal and keep it focused on domestic market which is going to be our rescue strategy for the next few months. Tourism is a fragile business and you need to recognise that things won’t be completely in our control always like the coronavirus situation. The worst thing that can happen in this panic virus atmosphere is businesses closing down.”

Text: Ujeena Rana





With a strong passion for tourism and conservation, Lisa Choegyal is based in Kathmandu with a wide range of affiliations. She is the New Zealand Honorary Consul to Nepal since 2010. A specialist in planning, developing, operating and marketing pro-poor sustainable tourism, Lisa Choegyal has undertaken consultancy roles in multiple countries in a career spanning over 40 years in the sector.

Most of her international consultancy work is undertaken with Tourism Resource Consultants of Wellington, New Zealand. Her clients include governments, tourism boards, development agencies, NGOs, local communities and private sector operators. As examples of her Nepal work, Lisa was Team Leader of the ADB Ecotourism Project 2000-2001, DFID tourism

specialist monitoring TRPAP 2001-2005, tourism consultant for the ADB SASEC programme 2004-2008, and for SNV Nepal prepared the Great Himalaya Trail development concept and programme design for DFID 2006-2010.

With a background in the private sector, Choegyal worked for over 20 years with the Tiger Mountain Group Nepal. She has worked on areas of environmental preservation, conservation awareness, community development, government and media liaison. She serves on a number of boards including Glacier Works Inc, Chance for Change, and International Trust for Nature Conservation, Rotary Mid-Town and Nepal Heritage Society. Choegyal is also a writer, photographer, editor of travel and guidebook publications, and widely experienced in film handling.

Choegyal arrived in Nepal in 1974 as a 23 year old backpacker on the road to discovering the Himalayas; little did she know that this would become her adopted home. She shares a deep bond with Nepal and is a strong proponent of the tourism industry here. Excerpts of a conversation with a multifaceted woman who has given to the country with deep affection and a sense of strong purpose:

What keeps you occupied currently?

I have been in Nepal for so long and I have involved myself in so many arenas but basically they are all connected with tourism and conservation. My background is in private sector in tourism, working with wildlife and trekking and adventure tourism. Since the mid-90s, I have been working as an independent consultant all over Asia Pacific based with

a New Zealand company. And because of the New Zealand connection and because of my friendship with Edmund Hillary, I was honoured to be asked to be the New Zealand Honorary Consular. It has been 10 years now.

I have a company that does movies; helps to sort of make difficult, exciting movies happen like we did *Dr. Strange* a couple of years ago, and we did *Everest*. We do a lot of documentaries as well. Just helping to get coverage for Nepal for the country to have these high profile documentaries and feature movies shot here. And we got lots in the pipeline so we are really excited about what's coming up. Hopefully we can still in this weird situation we are in.

And more recently, I have been writing. Before I was doing writing but mainly writing



We sometimes underestimate what a very professional tourism industry we have got. But our current tourism operators, I believe, are not very inventive and not very innovative and they just prefer to sell the same old trekking areas.

it will be difficult to promote Nepal if we were a bit clever about improving our products and making a concerted effort to attract high-value, higher-paying segments. Why are we selling our beautiful mountains and amazing wildlife so cheap? We have fantastic resource. We forget that we have fantastic resource.

So you are saying that we are underselling Nepal?

I think we are selling ourselves too cheap. But it could be selling itself with a much broader spectrum of the market. In other words, attracting all kinds of different people. Not just the low-budget groups that we are getting from China and India. Of course, I am talking without the coronavirus. That's why I was excited about VNY. It had the opportunity to bring new products and go to new areas of the country, expand new geographic regions of the country because at the moment we are stuck in the same old Everest, Annapurna and Langtang for trekking and Pokhara, Chitwan and of course Lumbini but Lumbini is a good example where we don't have the product right. We are only attracting lower-income segment that come and go and don't want to stay long and not enough to attract them. And the higher sort of pilgrims, the lot that I am interested

in - Buddhists and pilgrimage tourism, we have done lots of studies on it. There are different sorts of pilgrims. But we are not attracting the ones who want to come and spend money and stay comfortably and stay a long time which we should be doing with the birthplace of Buddha. Just like Sagarmatha, that's the real icon of this country.

How did tourism get to where we are?

I think it's kind of understandable how we got here because of the insurgency. And even though it ended such a long time ago that now we can't even use it as an excuse, but we never really established ourselves since then. And we had too much emphasis on Kathmandu and Pokhara, probably too many hotel rooms in Kathmandu and Pokhara and not enough hotel rooms outside and not enough interesting, innovative lodges and high-end camps. It does not have to be luxury in terms of marble and glass but it needs to be luxury in what high value visitors want, which is very good guiding and very good knowledge of birds or culture, whatever it is that the people are coming to see. And we have got great guides here. We sometimes underestimate what a very professional tourism industry we have got. But our current tourism operators, I believe, are not very inventive and not very innovative and they just prefer to sell the same old trekking areas. Of course, that's one of the reasons I have worked a lot on the Great Himalaya Trail. The idea is to get people out east and west along the Himalayan range and bring benefits to the local communities in those remote areas.

From the development point of view, the idea is to get lots of businesses and get the local people involved and benefiting from tourism by having businesses along the trail. But there a lot of good reasons why people

are not going to Dolpa and Kanchanjunga; it's harder to get there, it's harder to have food and porters and tea houses and support when you get there. And with the weather and the airstrips, there are real constraints. But I do think that there are operators who are pretty unimaginative the way they are selling the same old circuits.

Do you think that the tourism entrepreneurs are not taking enough risks?

They are not just inventive enough. It is difficult. Until you get these products, it is like the chicken and egg situation. These high-end products like Dwarika's and Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge and there are some new ones coming up, the new Moksh in Jomsom, the new Begnas Hotel. I would like to see just maybe small luxury camps developing in new areas in the hills, like out there in Phaplu, there's already a very nice house there called the Happy House. We just need to get some new areas and new activities. In order to attract different segments so that we are not just dependent on the Chinese. We are not the only destination that is guilty of this. New Zealand is really suffering because Chinese are their most important market after Australians and they are really suffering today. And Nepal is suffering today because we put so many of our eggs in the China basket and of course India too is important. Tourism is a fragile business and you need to recognise that things won't be completely in our control like the coronavirus situation. Now, we should be looking very enthusiastically at domestic tourism. Big opportunity like during the insurgency. That's how the businesses kept going. They relied on Nepali tourists and they are really great travelers these days, not like before. That's a good opportunity.

Which is why I think it is good if Visit Nepal Year still has validity. I agree it

reports for my consulting work. But now I have the opportunity to write creatively with Nepali Times and other magazines. I started two years ago. Kunda Dixit asked me to do a column about tourism and conservation. I started off trying to highlight how much Nepal has achieved in the areas of eco-tourism and remote area tourism and adventure tourism, although we have many challenges and we had the insurgency and in between.

I started working in tourism here in 1974. And Nepal was a really fashionable place and got very high value tourists and had some really glamorous, interesting, new innovative products which are a bit short of these days. I was the Marketing Director of Tiger Tops and Mountain Travel which is the first trekking company for 25 years. Those were the real early days when we were putting in order to market Tiger Tops and trekking, we had to market Nepal and so we worked really closely with other operators. And in those days, travel agents sent people here, no internet, everyone came through bookings.

How has the internet changed things?

You got to say it is easier now. We have got social media and we have got so much improved communication. When I first came here, we didn't even have fax, we had only cables and telex. We have all the communication but then it's also much more competitive because everyone else has it too. And I think Nepal has really suffered after the insurgency. Quite understandably the tourism board and the operators just wanted to get bodies to bed and wanted to get people here. So we kind of got ourselves stuck in this low-budget reputation of being a low-budget destination. Whereas before the insurgency, we were a fashionable destination and we had all these glamorous celebrities. And so I don't think





If you get up early in the morning, go to the bazaars late at night or visit the Durbar Square, I think you can still find the old magic in Nepal. But I think you just have to look a lot harder than you used to when I first came here.

Within an overall government promotion strategy, VNY could have had a really important role but it cannot be just an ad-hoc sort of one-year activity. It has to be part of the overall strategy to position Nepal as an adventure destination with all these new activities.

But it has been unfortunate that the media has criticised things like the skating in Gokyo. It seemed to me like a niche activity but those are kind of quite exciting, image-setting new ideas. Very dramatic the film and the photos of the skating. It is a pity. It is so easy to be negative. Everyone loves to be negative in Nepal. I like to be more positive. And those poor old yetis that did not work out that well. I don't think those yetis are very attractive but it was a good idea and it was a Nepali artist who created it.

I have been very supportive of VNY actually. I think it's a good opportunity. And now if we had just adapted it and kept it as a good opportunity for domestic tourism because it is a waste of energy and money to be promoting internationally in this climate until things come clear. May be things will come clear. Viruses do not live above 27 degrees centigrade. It is going to get hotter in Asia. It will be summer. Not so true in Europe. Viruses could go as quickly as it came. We have to be always ready. So we need to be have a spread of spectrum:

the cheap ones and the budget ones, the backpackers, the cheap groups and then also the higher paying ones. They are the ones Nepal has lost. And the domestic segments and the pilgrims. Very important.

Where are we placed in sustainable tourism?

I think we are one of the best places. I would say 'were', probably were one of the best places in Asia that was managing sustainable tourism. We have such good natural resource management, conservation scene, we have got such a good wildlife and successful tiger conservation, rhinos, amazing number of birds and of course, cultural heritage is a big attraction. The rebuilding of the cultural heritage after the earthquake; that has really given a importance to the artisans and the craftsmen and master craftsmen who are very good at the construction of the historic temples and the buildings. We are trying to be proud of our local architecture. So Nepal has a good understanding of sustainable tourism. Over the years, there have been a lot of projects and assistance given to Nepal to try and help understand this from the UN, UNDP, from the British, SNV, the Dutch, Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, they have all concentrated on tourism.

The thing that worries me at the moment is with the new provincial governments who really are very keen to get involved in tourism but unless they can be capacitated and understand a bit more about how tourism works, they are going to get disappointed by having these initiatives they start all by themselves on a one off basis which may not actually work. But there is a lot of energy going around the country with people wanting to generate new destinations. I was just invited to a festival at Sumbh in April in some annual festival celebrating to promote tourism. Lots of new areas are

getting involved in tourism but that needs to be done in a cohesive, systematic manner and it has to work together between the provincial level with the central government and with the local people and with the tourism industry.

It is not simple but there have been times when Nepal has been leading Asia in this. Chitwan is one of the best national parks in Asia and in those days Tiger Tops was considered one of the best wildlife experiences in Asia just as good as Africa. Now we really dropped back behind India, behind Bhutan even.

Is Nepal still a Shangri-la?

I think you can still find the Shangri-la. If you get up early in the morning, go to the bazaars late at night or visit the Durbar Square, I think you can still find the old magic in Nepal. But I think you just have to look a lot harder than you used to when I first came here. It's interesting, just in the last month, I had a film director come here who had never come here before and a real world Asian expert on hotels - two completely different Westerners coming to Nepal having different angles. But both of them said the same thing to me. They just could not believe what an amazing place Nepal is as a destination.

When I was working looking after tourists and meeting tourists every day and organising trips, it was common for me to meet people who said it was the best holiday of their life. It's been so wonderful in the 1980s and 1990s; it was common for people to rave about how amazing Nepal is. But in recent years, you don't hear people raving about Nepal quite so and I am even horrified to meet people who come here and don't like it at all. They don't get it at all. But I think the magic is very much there to be found. We have extraordinary destinations compared to many of our neighbors. We have so much to offer. We just need to package it right and get the product right.

is impossible to promote Nepal internationally in this atmosphere, makes no sense. But for the activities within and around Nepal, I think it can be very good for the industry to bring focus on how important the domestic market is to Nepal.

It is very hard for us to quantify as tourism analysts. It is very hard to count the Nepali tourists, it is very hard to count how much money they spend, and it is very hard to count where they go even because all the statistics and the entry fees and such stuff are all geared towards non-Nepali tourists. It is pretty hard to know but I think we should be taking domestic tourism seriously and it is an exciting opportunity that this horrible virus situation is creating for us all.

You see hope in this dire situation...

They are going to have to. They are going to have to stay afloat using the local market. It is a very unusual situation. Unprecedented. I think that this is much more damaging than the actual disease. Drastic economic effect that is going to hurt places like Nepal. Nepal is being pretty sensible about checking people coming from the virus-destinations. I think that is a better strategy than just closing your borders which is pretty drastic. It is better what we are doing. It is more sensible.

What did the government get right and wrong in the VNY promotion?

I personally think that the Nepal Tourism Board is a really important institution for tourism because it is where the public and the private sectors come together. In other destinations where you have successful tourism, it is because of the government and the business people working together which is not easy but in a country like Nepal where we got a very strong private sector and a rather under-resourced government, it is even more important for something like the tourism board to function and work.



When I first walked around Annapurna in 1974, it was all trails and villages. It is just irresponsible of tour operators to send trekkers to walk around Annapurna given the fact that Annapurna trek is not the same now. Are we surprised they don't like walking down a road? I went to Mustang last year and these poor trekkers were being made to walk along the horrible gravel riverbed when everyone else was shooting past in jeeps covering them with dust. It is just bad planning. It is not clever tourism operating. But if people don't want to pay then what happens is that operators go down to the lowest common denominator and they just give the lowest level of service. It is real pity because our assets are our culture, our wildlife, our scenery. We deserve better.

If you were given the task to market Nepal, what would you categorically work on?

I would absolutely continue

to do what VNY Secretariat is doing which is to emphasise its amazing nature, culture, adventure destinations because all these things we can deliver on. But I would really like to see a better spread of quality experiences and quality accommodations. I don't necessarily mean expensive; I just mean really well done. Our most expensive, the Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge, and we are one of the most expensive and we probably got the highest room rate but to be honest it is not that high compared to other destinations like \$200-300 a night. We are up with Dwarika's and Moksh. There are other places like Bhutan or where my son is managing in Cambodia which is a camp, a very remote wildlife camp which is over \$1000 per person per night, and even \$2000-3000 per room per night. Actually not even a room; it is a tent. A really glamorous tent; but it is a tent. I am not saying

it has to be expensive or it has to be marble and glass. It just has to be stylish and deliver what people are wanting.

I would say, nature, culture, adventure, some new products and I would say facilitate new areas like giving subsidised airfares or upgrading airports.

Many people have already been to Pokhara and Chitwan and Kathmandu, they want to go somewhere new - east or west, into the mountains or into the Tarai. Make the travel easier. The airfares to the west are so expensive. I did a tourism plan for Western Nepal a couple of years ago and it is such a constraint - the cost of the airfare. But let's not forget what an amazing place Nepal is.

Do you think VNY should be brought to complete standstill in view of the pandemic?

We have done so much work on VNY. I think they are completely right to stop the overseas promotions but keep

the momentum going within Nepal and keep it focused on domestic market which is going to be our rescue strategy for the next few months. The other thing, it's really hard in Nepal, because of the way the government thinks, not really because the government is short of money, but the way they think. In New Zealand, one of the first things the government did was give benefits to keep businesses going and to keep individuals going. The worst thing that can happen in this panic virus atmosphere is businesses closing down and then you really do get into recession. As you can see, the government and national banks everywhere are trying to lower interest rates and lower everything possible to get businesses going. I think what they should be doing here is giving tax breaks for all tourism companies. **B**

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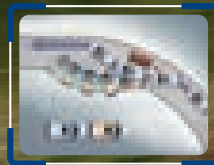
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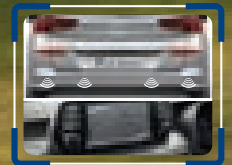
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GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Text: Pushpa Raj Acharya

The government has declared relief package to protect daily wage earners severely hit by the slowdown in economic activities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the government enforced lockdown. Some facilities are being extended to taxpayers and borrowers for tax filing and loan repayment. Government has promised to raise healthcare expenses for free treatment of COVID-19 infected and waive custom duty on import of healthcare equipment and lifesaving drugs.

The government enforced lockdown beginning March 24 to April 7, with further extension to April 15, to stem the spread of COVID-19. Nine cases have been confirmed so far. Despite the low count of cases, the government maintains that precautionary actions will be continued till the pandemic is controlled globally.

Despite movement of people being curbed and sealing of borders and airports, cargo vehicles will be allowed to move seamlessly to ensure supplies provided disinfection standards fixed by the Ministry of Health and Population and Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock are rigorously maintained.

The government has ensured food security to protect vulnerable population and daily wage earners who

are facing income shocks due to the COVID-19 crisis. The government distributes relief packages of food and daily essentials from the ward level based on local government data. Guidelines of relief package comprise 30kg rice, 3kg pulses, 2kg salt, 2 liters edible oil, 2 kg sugar and 2 units of soap. Minister for Federal Affairs and General Administration, Hridayash Tripathi has announced that relief package distribution has been already started from the ward level. Apart from the government, non-governmental, charitable organisations and some individuals are also distributing relief in coordination with the local government. Art of Living, Nepal Chapter has distributed relief package to 4,000 families in Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur through wards, according to Bimal Kedia, a businessman and Member of Parliament.

The Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens has decided to provide Rs 10,000 to senior citizens without family support and those living in community housing and religious sites.

The government has urged employers to provide salary uninterruptedly to employees including tourism businesses that have been especially hit hard by the situation for which they will be allowed to

use social welfare funds until business returns to normal. The government will deposit the salaries for March-April to workers in the organised sector who are registered with the Social Security Fund.

The government's announcement on March 29 has some important provisions to extend healthcare support to general public. The government has announced free treatment for COVID-19 patients and meeting the meal requirements of those living in quarantine and hospitals. The government has also urged hospitals to provide 20% discount to patients for treatment. It has waived custom duty on import of healthcare equipment and lifesaving drugs to minimise the cost of healthcare. To encourage frontline service providers like health workers, security personnel, ambulance drivers, volunteers, cleaners in hospitals, electricians, water suppliers among others, the government has offered an insurance scheme worth Rs 2.5 million.

Suppliers of daily essentials and groceries have been asked to take proper measures of disinfection to avoid the chances of virus spread. The government has announced that it will earmark sufficient budget for the Ministry of Health and Population to cope with the pandemic.

The government has

decided to provide door-to-door delivery on essential supplies. Groceries are allowed to remain open for certain hours from 3pm to 5pm during lockdown. The Golyan Group is operating mobile shops for the supply of fruits, vegetables and daily essentials in different areas.

The government has announced 10% discount on rice, flour, pulses, salt, sugar, edible oil sold by Nepal Food Corporation and Salt Trading Corporation Limited. Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), Nepal Telecom and other private telecommunication service providers and internet service providers are asked to waive 25% on bills of mid-March to mid-April. Consumers are provided one month extension to pay bills of internet, electricity, drinking water and public utility services. NEA has been asked to provide up to 50% waiver on bills for industries.

Schools have been asked to waive a month's fee except on food and accommodation charge of residential schools. Parents of students stranded abroad are allowed to send up to \$500 and up to €300 for students stranded in Cyprus where reportedly there are over 3,000 students in the island nation of Europe.

Through the Insurance Board, insurers are asked to suspend penalties and additional charges incurred

in premium submission or insurance policy renewal. Insured can make payment of the obligation 15 days after situation resumes normalcy. Likewise, the government has provided one-month deadline extension till mid-May for renewal of companies, vehicle renewal, route permit fees among others.

The government has provided deadline extension for tax filing and loan repayment. Borrowers can repay loan and interest matured in the third quarter by the end of ongoing fiscal. Those who are able to payback loan within third quarter will get 10% waiver on total interest matured within the period, as per the Nepal Rastra Bank.

Similarly, corona-hit businesses can avail subsidised credit from the refinancing window of the Central Bank to sustain and revive their business as the NRB expands its refinancing facility to Rs 60 billion from Rs 50 billion. Likewise, mandatory provision of cash reserve ratio (CRR) has been lowered to 3% from 4% which is expected to generate an additional Rs 32 to 33 billion liquidity into the financial system. NRB has taken another monetary tool to lower and stabilise the rate of lending and deposits through lowering the interest rate corridor rates or policy rates by one percentage point.

Taxpayers are allowed to submit income tax and value added tax (VAT) and tax filing details by May 7. Income tax payers must submit the details of tax deduction at source (TDS) till mid-February and income tax submission details must be submitted by May 7. Apart from this second quarter installment of income tax and tax filing details can be submitted by the mid May. Sugar mill owners are asked to clear the outstanding dues of cane growers by mid-May.

However, experts and economists have said that the initiations taken by the government and Central Bank are marginal and sorely insufficient to revive the economy hit by pandemic

HIGHLIGHTS

- Landlords have been urged to exempt rent to tenants, especially wage earning tenants, for a month.
- 25% rebate on electricity tariff for those who consume up to 150 units of electricity.
- No penalty on electricity, water and telephone bills of Falgun and Chaitra. These can be cleared by the end of Baisakh.
- Nepal Telecom and private telecom service providers to offer 25% discount on data and voice call for the period of lockdown. ISPs encouraged to offer 25% discount.
- Food relief to marginalised households through local level governments throughout lockdown.
- Salt Trading to offer 10% rebate on rice, lentils, sugar, oil and salt during the crisis.
- Health Ministry to be accorded additional budget for procurement of medical supplies. Customs waiver on import of medical equipments and all drugs
- Employers directed to pay salaries of wage workers of organised and unorganised sectors
- Provincial and local level governments to establish a fund through to disburse relief materials
- Extension of deadline for paying taxes for Falgun and Chaitra. VAT, Income Tax and Advanced Tax payment deadline extended to Baisakh 25

especially the multiple impacts such as production slump, revenue loss caused by the demand shock, job loss and impact on remittances which is a major source of foreign exchange reserve. Nara Bahadur Thapa, former Executive Director of NRB said that the steps taken by

the government are simply, 'marginal' and 'insufficient' to revive the economy.

In view of impact on remittance inflow caused by COVID-19, the government has decided to curtail imports. It has banned import of vehicles above \$50,000; refined alcohol (any finished product of alcohol); black pepper; peas; betel nuts and dried dates. The government has also lowered the gold import quota by half to 10kg per day for commercial banks. Only commercial banks are allowed to import gold in the country.

The March 29 announcement has decided to provide employment opportunities for those barred from foreign employment following the COVID crisis and those who have had to return from foreign employment under the Prime Minister Employment Program (PMEP).

Companies that have agreement with the government to supply goods or have been awarded contract for government works will get the facility of one-month extension of bank guarantee if it expires by mid-April. The government has also decided to request the Financial Action Task Force through Asia Pacific Group (APG) to defer the review of Effectiveness of Money Laundering Prevention in this difficult situation.

The Finance Minister has said that the government will come up with further relief and economic stimulus based on further developments.

The 16th meeting of Coronavirus Prevention High Level Committee led by Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Ishwar Pokharel on April 2 has decided to ease permit for work in agriculture sector: harvesting, plantation as well as development works and operation of industries.

The liability incurred in COVID-19 response will be covered through transfer of resources and realigning of the annual budget. The federal and sub-national governments have set up COVID-19 Response Fund to raise funds and the government can use resources

from other funds like National Disaster Management Fund, Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund, according to Finance Minister Khatiwada.

The federal government has set up Corona Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment Fund for COVID-19 response with Rs 50 crores by the government. An additional 1.19 billion was collected in this fund through large donors like Nepal Oil Corporation and Ncell who contributed Rs 50 crores and Rs 10 crores respectively. Many corporate houses, banks, individuals have been contributing to this fund.

Besides, the government will mobilise foreign assistance to cope with the challenges mainly protecting lives, sustaining the economy and protecting jobs. The government has decided to accept \$ 29 million from the World Bank Group, \$50 million from Asian Development Bank and 78.5 million SDR (special drawing rights) from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the COVID-19 response, as per Minister Khatiwada.

The COVID-19 Crisis Management Centre (CCMC) has been established to execute important announcements, proper monitoring and coordination. The CCMC led by DPM Pokharel comprises of ministers from Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Health and Population, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration as well as the head of the all security forces: Nepal Army, Nepal Police, Armed Police Force and National Investigation Department. This mechanism is dedicated to enforcing all decisions related to COVID-19 response and also to advise the government on vital decisions. **B**



DOCS, PARAMEDICS OUTSHINE ALL

ANGELS IN WHITE CREATE NEW MANAGEMENT STANDARDS IN CORONA WAR



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

I have no hesitation in saying that doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers have outshone all of us in the ongoing global war against Covid-19. They have plunged into the battle to save humanity, caring little about their personal safety. Unmindful of the adverse circumstances and the meager resources available to them, doctors have put their lives on the line so that we may live. In this noble pursuit, many of them have paid with their lives. Yet they continue to fight on 24x7.

Why am I talking about medicos in a column meant exclusively for young business executives and managers? For the simple reason that doctors and their dedicated aides have set new benchmarks worth emulation by all professionals. Let knowledge of best practices blow in through the windows from all sides.

It is often said that if you do what you love, then you will not need to work all your life. That is what we describe as labour of love.

Medicos are able to elevate themselves to this level of spiritual existence because their vocation combines passion for work with compassion for

whomsoever they serve, that is us. This is not to say that doctors live like ascetics hardly earning enough for themselves, kith and kin. But when the profession is all about service in the best sense of the term, the practitioner is bound to rise to a more humane level. It is this virtual godliness that drives medicos to take the biggest risks. Such state of mind is rarely seen in other professions, barring soldiers. Both of them live and die for others. They bring alive Satyug for us time and again especially when we are wallowing in sickness, misery and desperation.

The doctors' Hippocratic oath, SOPs and protocol are such that any wavering perforates their conscience. It is moving and touching to discover the call of conscience at a time when the corporate world is seen wedded solely to the profit motive. No wonder, doctors command tremendous respect the world over.

The Corona crisis is witnessing medical services crumbling even in the richest and most advanced countries. The death toll in the mighty

USA has crossed figures from China which was the first to report about the deadly outbreak. Medically proficient and affluent countries like Italy and Spain have thrown up their hands. Iran too is getting battered by the calamity, as are many other nations.

Though many other Asian countries like Nepal and India have, till the time of writing this column, been spared the full fury of this malevolently infectious disease, the doctors' role is under tremendous pressure. Medical resources in these countries are no match to those available in the rich West. Adding to the enormity of the challenge is the large population, poor education and lack of awareness in many Asian countries. If that was not enough, religious beliefs of some fairly large communities are hindering use of modern medical practices to combat and prevent widespread occurrence of Covid-19. There have been instances of healthcare workers being violently chased out of localities predominantly inhabited by such communities.

Blinded by their faith such people are not only risking themselves but are also serving as super-spreaders of this incurable malaise. Their obscurantism and bigotry constitute a big challenge to the entire healthcare fraternity, governments and local administrations. But the ultimate burden has to be borne by the medicos. And they are doing it ungrudgingly.

The corporate world and its denizens need to learn a thing or two from the super heroes of the moment. There is so much for us to learn about risk management, extracting the most from shrinking supply chains, maintaining morale and team spirit, and much more with a never-say-die spirit.

It is also time for Nepal's top brass to ruminate over our fragile medical structure. Once Covid-19 is gone, as it is bound to, people will expect the politicians to create a more robust healthcare system for the country. The corporate world too will need to pitch in. The post-Corona world will be a new world. I am looking forward to it. **B**



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COVID-19

IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS IN NEPAL

WHAT DO YOU SEE THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS IN NEPAL? WHAT MEASURES SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT BE ALREADY CONSIDERING AND SHOULD AN ECONOMIC RESPONSE TASKFORCE NOT ALREADY BE IN PLACE?



The COVID-19 outbreak is a human tragedy with a growing impact on the global economy but what will it mean for business in Nepal. With overarching uncertainties, no one can really predict the wide ranging short and long term impacts of this phenomenon on the economy; **Business 360** collected a few expert opinions on the impact of the coronavirus crisis.



Rameshore Khanal
Former Finance Secretary

Government kept on watching and analysing the situation before announcing any economic policy measures to counter the corona threat to economy. The measured approach taken through the announcement of economic package announced last week is good. The question is how effectively it will all be implemented.

enough quantity in inventories to meet the demand for next few months by which time supplies will be restored. This expectation also appears to be losing ground in the recent weeks. Particularly, the SMEs, which normally don't maintain large inventories, are facing complete closure. Financial sector is expecting worst to come in their balance sheets. Even before lockdown was officially announced, many daily-wage earners in prominent commercial towns had lost their work. Their small savings eroded quickly, they found themselves in precarious situation.

Agriculture, which was expected to be less affected, is also now facing challenge. Farmers have difficulty reaching their products to market. And, as the winter crop harvesting season is nearing, there's worry in the countryside if they will be able to harvest the crop. Remittance, in the last three months remained stable or growing slowly, can be hit badly going forward. If mass layoffs happen in foreign employment destinations, we are going to face insurmountable problems.

Government kept on watching and analysing the situation before announcing any economic policy measures to counter the corona threat to economy. The measured approach taken through the announcement of economic package announced last week is good. The question is how effectively it will all be implemented.

There are very critical issues that government needs to put all its powers. First, health services must be beefed up immediately equipped with all the necessary physical facilities and critical supplies. Second, and even more important, is to ensure that farming activities continue, and farm-to-market logistics are given all-out support by government. Third, all efforts must be made to restore the supply chain of SMEs, help them by loan rescheduling and additional loans to resume operations.

COVID-19, in just about three months, has failed many pundits. All predictions have tumbled and uncertainty is in the horizon. Many predicted initially that with the draconian measures China - the initial epicenter of outbreak - executed, the world will conquer this invisible war. In weeks after, the epicenter became Italy, now it's the United States and no one knows where the next epicenter will be. If this moves to least prepared and weak states, Corona-ravages will be the worst in mankind's recorded history.

Pundits initially predicted that the global supply chain breakdown due to closure of factories and complete lockdown of transport logistics will hit global economic growth by a few percentage points. As oil prices started nose-diving, stock prices in the major markets followed suit. Authorities in the large

economies quickly acted to salvage the fall in market. But this was just not enough.

Workplaces became difficult to work, people lost jobs. Hardest hit were the ones working on daily wage basis. Then came the second round of larger fiscal packages, largest ever done in our times. It is not certain if this will be enough. Human knowledge of managing economy in dealing with a crisis of this nature is facing a monumental challenge.

It's not just economic activities, major sporting and cultural events, global dialogue on important issues have all been postponed indefinitely. The world has come to a standstill. Over half of the world population is in lockdown.

Here in Nepal, the potential impact was initially downplayed, officially. Minister at the helm claimed, "we are corona-free". Even until a few weeks ago, citizens were

asked to be proud of our high-immunity lineage. What an imaginary lineage? As a result of this initial complacency, we lost much of valuable time in making right preparations. This was the reason for inadequate testing and severe shortage of essential medical supplies at the time when government announced nation-wide lockdown.

Our tourism industry was the first to suffer almost from the beginning of this year, which unfortunately happened to be Visit Nepal Year 2020. The jolt to tourism industry wasn't like shocks in the past. This time, the industry had made huge investments in anticipation of success of immensely ambitious tourism year promises. Due to supply constraints, manufacturing industries, too, reported slowdown in production. However, there were also words of consolation from industry leaders that nation has

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has not only had devastating effects on the health of people all around the globe but is also having a growing impact on the global economy; Nepal is no exception. The current focus, rightly so, has been geared towards navigating this crisis. However in the urgency to win the battle against COVID-19, it's easy to lose sight of the actions that might be needed in preparedness for tomorrow.

I feel that one cannot rule out structural economic damage combined with the lack of policy response to prevent widescale bankruptcies, unemployment, and a financial crisis. Therefore, the Government must act now; it is imperative not only to provide possible support and relief to businesses and employees to survive the current debacle but to also create a taskforce to monitor, analyse, strategize and prepare the country for immediate resurgence once the outbreak has relented. The Government must start planning today with its stakeholders for an economically and socially viable path to the next stage.

For the businesses, while the need of the hour is to balance business needs and manage employee expectations, build employee morale and take appropriate measures for their health and safety, all businesses whether big or small, and every executive should use this time also to deliberate on the company's rapid response, adaptation to change, and re-emergence in a position of strength.

We no doubt live in a digital economy and I firmly believe that in the 'new tomorrow' the 'position of strength' will come from digital prowess and infrastructure. However, Nepal is far behind in embracing the digital advances taking place in more developed nations. In the current shutdown, it's the digital infrastructure that has enabled the latter countries to remain productive in many sectors by



Nirvana Chaudhary
Managing Director, Chaudhary Group

The Government must act now; it is imperative not only to provide possible support and relief to businesses and employees to survive the current debacle but to also create a taskforce to monitor, analyse, strategize and prepare the country for immediate resurgence once the outbreak has relented.

making their employees work from home and provide access to services and products from the digital platform. A number of Nepalese companies, mainly in the food sector, have taken the initiative to provide e-commerce for their customers. As people remain in lockdown, individuals have realised the far-reaching significance of digital technologies and capabilities in their lives.

Having experienced a new way of living, there is bound

to be a paradigm shift; the likelihood that spending may permanently shift between categories and online services could get adopted far faster. I have a feeling people will become financially conservative and there will be a huge influx of consumerism; not for the high-end luxury goods but for necessities. Decoding this new normal—and ensuring that the company has a strategy and wherewithal to navigate it—is an important task facing businesses. The ability to

visualise from now the shift in industry-specific regulatory and competitive environment and plan how to reinvent is the key. I am sure in times to come people's usage of data and data penetration will rapidly increase and open up an ecosystem for digital economy. I foresee that no matter which industry you are in AI, data mining and analysis and the ability to leverage your internet, 4G, 5G capabilities will give you competitive advantages to take the quantum leap of capitalising on the opportunity that will come.

However, most businesses in Nepal have not invested in logistics and ERP software. Creating e-commerce and supply chain logistics will be a challenge but have to be established. The banking sector will have to re-innovate and leverage on digital banking which already exists extensively in the developed countries. The perspective of financial services will change. Digital is the way forward across multiple segments as witnessed in the success stories across the globe; specifically in South East Asia. The paradigm shift, albeit challenging, provides incredible opportunities in the days to come.

I think the COVID-19 phenomenon will make us prudent and stronger. At CG we have laid the grounds by laying the foundation of ERP, redefining certain aspects in e-commerce, the financial services, the supply chain, marketing of electronic consumer goods, and managing our various companies as an ecosystem.

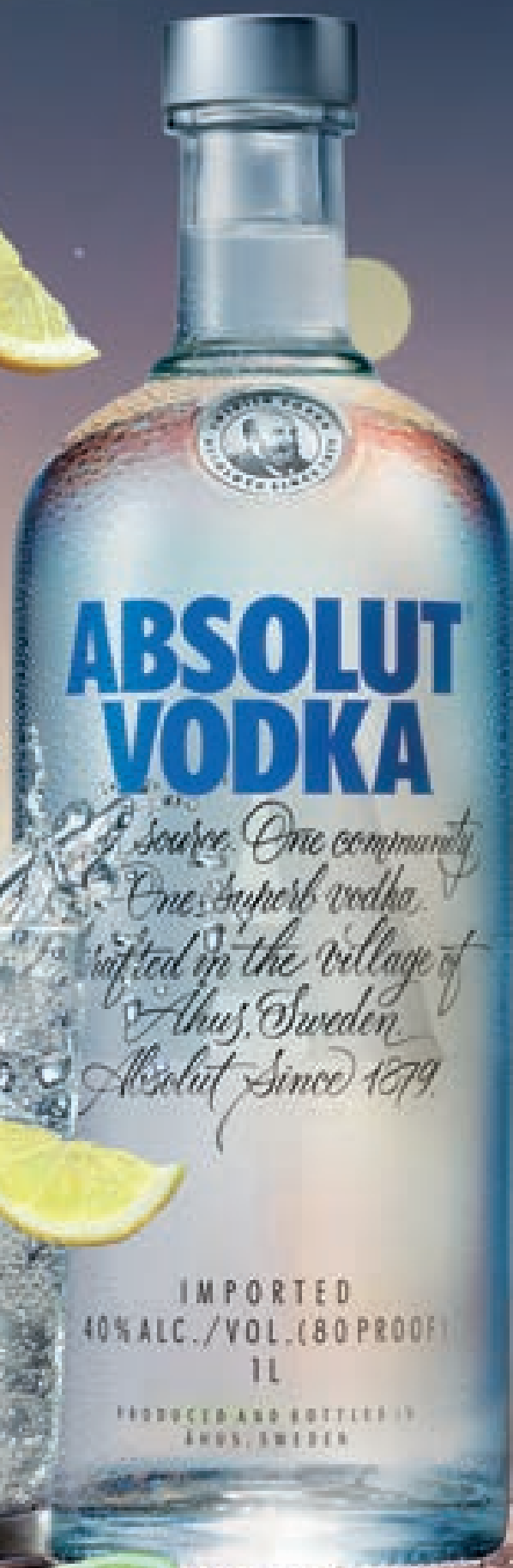
Ultimately, I think businesses will not die, but they will evolve by leveraging technology to refine their experiences.

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The COVID19 has hit the world in an unprecedented manner. For Nepal, our government response was nothing unexpected. The Nepali way of doing things in a manner that lacks plans, coordination and focus. This is reflected in the business sector also as large businesses like not having good successions plans and do not have contingency plans.

This is the Nepali way of doing things i.e. respond to crisis as it comes rather than working on plans and executing it. However, the Nepali businesses have seen much disruptions created by different actors apart from natural calamities like earthquakes and floods. Political parties and labour unions protected by them have been responsible for long shut downs of businesses. Therefore, compared to other parts of the world Nepalis are more adaptive to working across these shutdowns.

It is too early to say what will happen after the dust settles but for Nepal, two major areas that will be hit will be tourism in short to medium term and remittances in the short term. For tourism, it will not only be about the hotels and airlines but many other micro and small enterprises including tea houses, handicrafts and other allied businesses. With Nepal opening up domestic travel and international travel being restricted, domestic tourism will boom as people who are used to traveling will do so. So a bit can be recovered as let us not forget that 60% of tourism revenues in Nepal come from domestic tourists.

In terms of remittance, a lot of Nepali migrant workers will get into agriculture labour that will increase agriculture product prices but ensure the supply chain disruption from imports from India will be managed. Nepalis will find newer destination to migrate to in the medium term as the traditional job markets will have challenges.



Sujeev Shakya

Thought Leader, Author & CEO of beed

In the past three decades of multiparty democracy, rarely government seeks opinion to handle issues but relies on their sycophants and members close to the party to come up with solutions. Like elsewhere in Nepali society, government is reluctant to take advice from people who are smarter than them.

The government is in disarray as the focus is on managing the Prime Minister's health and ensuring the cracks within the current ruling party does not widen. The Finance Ministry thinks it knows how to fix it well so leave it to them to handle the crisis.

In the past three decades of multiparty democracy, rarely government seeks opinion to handle issues but relies on their sycophants and members close to the party to come up with solutions. Like elsewhere in Nepali society, government is reluctant to take advice from people who are smarter than them. Therefore their reliance on people from cartels and super-cartels for advice will continue.

The business community is also reluctant to reach out to firms specialising in crisis management and business continuity management but look upon their respective cartel leaders to provide

direction. In a country, where professionalism and corporatisation is a far cry, the solutions will evolve the Nepali way. Everyone loves to be in their comfort zones and not disrupt the status quo.

Hope can be pinned on the new generation and first generation entrepreneurs who will devise innovative collaborative solutions to meet the crisis. They will realise new opportunities that the crisis has presented and perhaps silently break the status quo. For instance, a good fleet of delivery vehicles will disrupt the existing transportation cartel protected by super-cartels or new ways of aggregating artisans to deliver handcrafted goods for Nepali diaspora will emerge. It is all about looking at potentials.

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Narayan Bajaj FCA
Head of Operation, Global Reach NEPAL

I foresee the possibility of liquidity crisis in the financial market. Financial institutions will be under tremendous pressure to reschedule debts, both for short term and long term. The expected new governor is going to be leading in very tough times.

The economic scenario and statistics show that the world economy is running out of steam. If the pandemic is not controlled worldwide shortly, the Nepali economy is also going to suffer a crisis, even though it remained immune to the great recession of 2007-09 and others. We can only hope for this again.

The Nepali economy is likely to see severe effect mainly on three segments:

Tourism industry, remittance inflow where the recovery phase might extend to year 2021 and international trade in the short term due to the impact of supply chain constraints and decrease in consumption.

The reduced flow of tourists will likely continue for at least a year or two. It will put the hospitality industry in peril leading to loss of jobs in this industry at a larger level.

The already hit global economy is likely to hit Nepalese worker jobs and hence remittance inflow: NRB statistics shows more than 50% of the remittance comes from Gulf countries. Given that Nepal's foreign currency reserves are highly dependent on remittance, in the worst-case scenario, a reduction in remittance and export earning inflows on the economy could be an eye opener for the future.

The GDP of Nepal might have an impact due to tourism and remittances itself which together contributes close to 20%. In recent times, financial institutions have invested heavily in long term debts to

real estate, manufacturing, infrastructure projects. The impact is yet to be evaluated since the supply chain constraints of goods and labour might delay the projects leading to over capitalisation of cost and capital shortage. I foresee the possibility of liquidity crisis in the financial market. Financial institutions will be under tremendous pressure to reschedule debts, both for short term and long term. The expected new governor is going to be leading in very tough times.

The Nepalese economy is primarily SME driven and all these factors will bring the SME under financial constraints too. The consumption factor in the

short term will show the way forward to their survival.

I feel that this is the most testing time for the Finance Minister who is working on the Budget which is due in a month's time. Given the limitations of resources, the need of the hour is how to stimulate the confidence of the private sector, tax payers and investors; and how the private sector can come together to support the government in this scenario.

Covid 19 has brought the world to a standstill, and Nepal is no different. One of the biggest fallouts of this entire crisis globally will be the economy, no one doubts that, and the implications of that are - of course - a bit scary. Here is what I think at this moment (considering that I could be entirely wrong, as this unfolds in front of us) will happen and what our response to this should be in Nepal.

The mega and large businesses are hurting but they will survive. They have the credit rating to take another loan, or are loud enough to take advantage of any bailout scheme the government launches. They will scale down operations as they reset, but will keep going once this is over.

The medium and small businesses will suffer the most, and the only ones that will survive are the ones with the least overheads right now, have the capacity to wait, especially the ones who have the financial patience to wait it out (time sensitive obviously), the ones who improvise, pivot and change according to the situation and take advantages of the new reality, or the ones who are clearly benefiting from the fact that the people who are staying at home now, hence are benefiting because of this crisis, while still delivering a service. The rest will collapse and the bigger ones will consolidate the market and take over that section of the pie, however big it might remain once this is over.

In the tourism business - that's my mainstay - the impact is going to be irreversible. The entire industry is turning on its head, travel behaviour is going to change, as well as travel spending as more and more middle class spenders are earning less during the lockdown and will do so as the economic fallout of this crisis sets in. The poor never travelled and the rich have the financial stability to continue where they left off. The

The financial response to this has to come fast from the government. They should launch a good analysis of all the data that they accumulated over the years - through financial records of companies - to quickly understand the effect on the workforce and the unemployment fallout.

implications of that are clear, and again the only companies that will survive will be the ones who move fast into this new reality.

What should Nepal be doing? The financial response to this has to come fast from the government. They should launch a good analysis of all the data that they accumulated over the years - through financial records of companies - to quickly understand the effect on the workforce and the unemployment fallout.

They should immediately launch an unemployment cell where people who got redundant from this crisis can register themselves, giving them essential data to start looking at a national-wide relief package. They should use this opportunity to modernise, changing the age old file pushing system (who wants to touch that adulterated file anymore) to a more modern online system. Nepal should also start the process of getting rid of paper notes and coins, it will take time to filter down to deeper parts of the country, but if we start, we will get there.

Overall, they should come out with a clear, well thought out financial relief package for stimulating the economy.



Raj Gyawali, Responsible Tourism Expert & Founding Director of Social Tours

This should address not only the needs of the big guns, but also the smallest businesses as they are the backbone of the economy.

What should businesses do in the medium term? Consider this. Post this crisis, the public inertia will mean more need for hygiene and social distancing while you do business. The implications of this are huge for the changes that are required in businesses. Cafes will have to maintain better hygiene and space out the tables a bit more, for example. Social distancing will be a norm for a while, so big events might not happen. More and more meetings will be online, meaning smaller office spaces, perhaps and a smaller workforce? All this and many other implications of this will mean that the following should be the current strategy

1. Keep yourself aware of what's happening in the market, as behaviours and demand changes
2. Be flexible and be ready

to pivot your business in the way it works, the markets, the workforce

3. Keep your teams ready, use the time to train them, and keep them informed and motivated (the last part is the toughest)

4. Change your offerings. Pretty much like post earthquake everything had to be new. The world is going to be new post covid19. Anything old is useless.

5. Learn from this and make disaster plans and recovery plans ready.

In the short term, remember that the big fight is not the economy or your teams or unemployment or loan repayment. It's the virus. Without that solved, we are going nowhere. So do your part and encourage all your stakeholders and teams to do the right thing. Stay at home, social distance, and collaborate and support all initiatives that can collectively defeat this scourge.



Shyamal Krishna Shrestha
Economist and Member of Sajha Party

(* The views expressed are personal)

The Covid-19 pandemic has sent shockwaves throughout the global economy, killing more than 50,000 people and infecting another million people so far. Global trade, commerce and travel have been severely disrupted and its resumption uncertain. Until an effective vaccine is found, the pandemic will continue to take its toll on human life and create uncertainty. Most governments have resorted to complete shut-down of their countries to prevent its spread. Due to sharp contraction in global demand, oil prices have declined significantly and led to sharp fall in carbon emissions, reducing pollution drastically. Many countries have announced economic relief packages worth trillions of dollars for recovery.

In South Asia, governments - including Nepal - have enforced shut-downs to check the spread of the pandemic. This extreme step has disrupted daily life and brought countries to a complete standstill. Unlike high-income nations

where the entire labour force is employed in the formal sector, the majority of workers are engaged in the informal sector in LDCs like Nepal as daily wage earners, without a social safety net. The shut-down in neighbouring India (which supplied 65% of Nepal's imports in 2018) will choke the supply of essential commodities (including food, fuel and intermediate and final capital goods), lowering domestic productivity while raising inflation. A food crisis could ensue when current stocks of food-grains run out and imports from India remain disrupted. A breakdown in law and order could trigger social unrest.

The labour force in Nepal's tourism sector chain - including aviation, travel and trekking agencies, cargo, hotels, restaurants - will face prolonged unemployment until global travel and movement restrictions are eased.

The share of remittances in GDP will decline significantly as migrant workers are sent

In South Asia, governments - including Nepal - have enforced shut-downs to check the spread of the pandemic. This extreme step has disrupted daily life and brought countries to a complete standstill. Unlike high-income nations where the entire labour force is employed in the formal sector, the majority of workers are engaged in the informal sector in LDCs like Nepal as daily wage earners, without a social safety net.

back to Nepal, putting pressure on the balance of payments. Reduced oil imports will, however, reduce Nepal's trade deficit with India. Exports of pashmina and readymade garments will contract sharply due to disruptions in main markets viz. the EU and the USA. The downturn in exports and tourism will reduce foreign exchange earnings and create macroeconomic pressures.

Unavailability of raw materials will bring the manufacturing sector to a complete standstill, creating unemployment and pushing people into poverty. As industry and services together contribute 75% to Nepal's GDP in 2018, a lengthy closure will lead to loan defaults, create a huge liquidity crisis in the banking system and raise the risk of financial instability.

National pride projects under construction have been halted, escalating costs and delaying their completion. With virtually no government spending, private investment and revenue collection in the last four months of the current fiscal year, GDP growth will be lower than targeted.

Before the lockdown came into effect in Nepal, the government announced various measures to ensure availability of food grains/ other essential commodities and curb black marketing. As the Covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented shock compared to the 2015 earthquakes and border disruptions, it will require innovative strategies for mitigation. GoN should form a mechanism to remove bottlenecks arising from disruption in the production and supply chain of essential commodities by mobilising its entire state machinery.

For the business sector, extension of deadline to file tax returns, reduction and/ or waiver in interest on bank loans for investment purposes, and reduction in prices for commodities provided by public utilities, are needed. In the long time, more bold reforms will be required to make Nepal self-sufficient in food production (as it is currently a net food importer), restore investor confidence and revive industrial growth. This could include reducing import duties on raw materials, providing subsidies and price support to farmers, increasing cash incentives to exporters, reducing/removing the monetary threshold for FDI, liberalising additional sectors in agriculture for attracting FDI to boost production and productivity, with the objective to raise investment, production and boost domestic employment.

The domestic health care system also needs to be reformed to face the challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic poses.

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CORONAVIRUS HITS FLAILING ECONOMY HARD

Text: Pushpa Raj Acharya

One fourth of the global population is under lockdown to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus, which has already affected 199 countries with confirmed cases of 664,590. A total of 30,890 infected lost life and 142,368 recovered so far as this article is being written.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic not only cost lives but also hit economies worldwide hard slowing down

global growth to below one per cent in 2020, as per initial estimates. The two largest economies – USA and China along with developed European nations have suffered heavily from the pandemic, even as the global progression of coronavirus remains uncertain.

The International Labour Organisation has said that there will be income loss of \$340 billion and 25 million people would become unemployed.

Nepal's preparedness remains inadequate

Due to lack of preparedness to cope with the COVID-19, Nepal is likely to face huge socio-economic loss if the virus is not contained. The Nepal government's ill-preparation is clearly evident in its slow and inadequate response to health systems or sustaining of the economy. "Nepal's preparation is always like digging a well only after the

house catches fire," said former Finance Secretary Rameshore Prasad Khanal.

The government sent a chartered flight to bring necessary medical equipment including personal protective suits for medical persons, a move taken only after they were condemned for ill-preparation by the frontline medical service providers. So far Nepal has done less than 1000 tests. The government has

been advised to trace and test more to combat the disease.

The country has only one lab to test coronavirus, however testing facility has been recently extended to Nepalgunj, Pokhara and Dharan among other places. "Saving lives along with sustaining the economy and retaining jobs should be the priority but the government's passivity raises serious concerns," said Khanal.

Magnitude of loss

The Nepali economy has yet to stabilize post earthquake followed by trade disruptions during the blockade. Nepal's economic growth nosedived during that time. The country was receiving remittance during that time and foreign aid but the current crisis could affect both.

Experts have identified the following economic challenges:

- Supply chain disruptions for industries
- Trade (import and export)
- Demand shock for Nepali business and industries including service sector like hospitality and airlines
- Shock in remittances inflow
- Slowdown in construction sector
- Industrial output loss
- Increase in unemployment

The magnitude of economic loss is huge in multiple sectors even as the country must incur rising expenses of government and healthcare systems.

Even the largest and most powerful economies are struggling to minimise losses. In Nepal, some private sector companies have already started to lay off staff to and minimise expenses.

Domestic airlines operators alone have faced a huge loss of over Rs 8 billion in the last two months, according to Yograj Kadel Sharma, spokesperson of the Airlines Operators Association of Nepal (AOAN). This was the situation before the lockdown. "Nepal's tourism sector was upbeat when the government had announced a substantial increase in the inflow of international tourists to cross two million in 2020. The private sector had made

investments to expand their capacity to cater to this figure," said Sharma. He urged the government to facilitate the severely hit sectors in tax filing and loan repayment.

The share of the service sector in the country's economy is around 60%. Retail and wholesale trade covers 15% of the GDP. Similarly transport, communication, storage covers 8% and real-estate and renting covers 12% of the GDP.

"We can take the example of Nepal Electricity Authority to elaborate how business entities are facing demand shock. Peak hour electricity demand plummeted to 945 megawatts from 1200 megawatts along with closure of industries, construction works during the lockdown," states Nara Bahadur Thapa, former Executive Director of Nepal Rastra Bank.

Industries are facing challenges to continue production even after the lockdown due to supply disruptions and export-oriented industries are facing trouble due to demand shock. Against this backdrop, the government has yet to come up with a plan to address the economic engine of the country.

Daily wage earners are hit hard as the government enforced lockdown without any relief package for the underprivileged and low-income groups. Former Secretary Khanal advises that this has to be solved as priority using the fund established by the government for the prevention and treatment of Corona infected people and those isolated in government operated quarantines.

He also urged the government to come up with an economic stimulus package as other countries are doing to minimise loss in both human and economic front. India has recently announced a stimulus package of \$ 22.5 billion. Similarly, the United States government announced a reportedly unprecedented economic stimulus of \$ 2 trillion. The Federal Reserve has cut down the rates to near zero in attempt to prop the US economy. Similarly, Britain

INDUSTRIES ARE FACING CHALLENGES TO CONTINUE PRODUCTION EVEN AFTER THE LOCKDOWN DUE TO SUPPLY DISRUPTIONS AND EXPORT-ORIENTED INDUSTRIES ARE FACING TROUBLE DUE TO DEMAND SHOCK.

government announced a 30 billion pound stimulus to cushion the economic shock of the coronavirus pandemic. UK government provides sick-pay bill of 14 days for those working in private companies if they have to isolated or quarantine because of infection. Similarly, Bank of England slashed its key interest rate to a record low of 0.25%. Corona-hit Italy has announced \$ 28 billion plan to revive economy.

Swornim Wagle, former Vice Chairman of the National Planning Commission (NPC) said that the country could face unprecedented challenges on macroeconomic stability if certain measures are not taken as early as possible. Experts opine that the government has Rs 241 billion unspent in the treasury and the delay in announcing a comprehensive economic stimulus may shatter the economy.

Additionally, the government has recently received \$29 million in grant from the World Bank Group to cope with the coronavirus disease. It is reported that this support will be spent to strengthen health services and primary health care, bolster disease monitoring and reporting, train front line health workers, encourage community engagement to maintain public trust, and improve access to treatment for the poorest patients.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank Group's private sector arm, has asked the country to support sustaining jobs and livelihoods. Another multilateral development partner, Asian

Development Bank has assured required financing for the recovery of the private sector.

Finance Minister Dr Yubaraj Khatiwada has said that his officials are negotiating with development partners to avail necessary cooperation. "Foreign cooperation is must for low-income countries like Nepal to fight with the coronavirus pandemic," Khatiwada said.

The Finance Minister further said that the scope of the Prime Minister Employment Programme will be revised to provide employment to those set to go abroad for foreign employment and create more opportunities within the country. "The economy will bounce back again as a strong and resilient economy with the execution of the government's revival plan," he said.

NRB has said that it is flexible towards one-time loan rescheduling and restructuring for corona-hit businesses. This provision is also mentioned in the half-yearly review of the Monetary Policy 2019-20 a month back. Gunakar Bhatta, Executive Director of NRB has said that the Central Bank will also provide concessional finance worth Rs 22 billion for severely affected sectors from the refinancing window of NRB, but the facilities are yet to come into effect.

The country's private sector has been urging the government to provide loan rescheduling and restructuring based on add on interest method (to add on interest matured in certain interval to principal) and defer the tax submission deadline of mid-April to mid-July, end of the fiscal year.

Public skepticism on government assurances rest low as the already flailing economy struggles further to survive the onslaught of the virus. Small and medium entrepreneurs struggle with the uncertainty of their existence as they are unable to pay rent or salaries with the impact of the pandemic and the lockdown. **B**

Understanding and Safeguarding Consumer Rights



Aayush Koirala graduated from, Kathmandu University School of Law, Dhulikhel. He works in the corporate law team of Pioneer Law Associates.

Anyone who consumes and uses any goods and services are deemed as consumers. As per the prevailing legal regime, the ultimate price of the goods and services and burden of taxes are eventually transferred to the consumer. Despite bearing all the costs, however consumers remain currently unable to get qualitative goods and services.

The right of a consumer to obtain quality goods and services is enshrined as a fundamental right under the Constitution of Nepal. In addition to this, the rights of a consumer are provided for in the Consumer Protection Act (CPA) 2075 and the Consumer Protection Rules (CPR) 2076, which was published last month.

Rights of consumers

The CPA has ensured different rights to consumers among which one of the fundamental ones is the right to consumer education. The CPA reiterates the basic right of every consumer to standard goods and services. Such goods and services should be made

easily available to consumers.

Consumers have the right to choose qualitative goods and services at competitive prices. Consumers also have the right to know about the price, composition, purity and quality of the goods and services. In addition, the CPA provides that consumers have the right to be secured of good health and life after consuming such goods and services. If a consumer is not satisfied with the goods purchased from a seller, any consumer may return the goods within seven days or take other similar goods equal to that price or the payment of the amount which was paid while

purchasing such goods.

Consumers have also been provided the right to pursue remedies against inappropriate businesses and operations, along with the right to compensation. This includes the right to fair hearing before concerned authorities.

Remedies

The CPA provides that any person can file a complaint before the Inspection Committee, Department or Investigation Officer, if the rights provided under the CPA are infringed. The Committee, Department or Investigating Officer may further investigate

the issue and take appropriate action under the CPA.

For compensation, the CPA provides that any consumer who has suffered any injury, loss due to any defect in the goods or services may file a complaint with the Consumer Court against the producer/ seller/ exporter/ distributor within six months of such injury, loss. Due to the lack of the formation of Consumer Court, cases are being filed at District Court or District Administration Office. Currently, the Government is planning to set up Consumer Court in each of the seven provinces.



Liabilities of different stakeholders

The Government of Nepal is the body for determining the standard and quality of goods and services. It is mandatory for producers to label their products. The label should contain the important details such as the name, address of the producer, ingredients, quantity and weight of the goods, quality of the goods (if quality of goods is determined), mode of using the goods and side effect likely to occur due to the use of such goods, expiry date, maximum retail price, batch number and date of manufacture of the goods, guarantee or warranty of such goods, precautions and others as prescribed by laws. The label must be either in Nepali or English. In case of imported goods such liability falls on the importer.

The CPA has envisaged the liabilities of producer, importer, transporter, storage, seller, service provider separately in order to make them liable for the goods supplied to consumer. For instance, the seller has the liability to demonstrate the goods in an accessible manner, along with price of the goods. The seller should ensure that the goods are kept in a condition which will enable the consumer to enjoy the product and sell the goods without discrimination to anybody. Similarly, the transporter has the liability to ensure that the goods are transported in safe manner so that the consumer can enjoy the same. The goods are to be transported in a condition which maintains the standard of goods.

If anyone among the producer, importer, carrier, hoarder, seller, service provider are found not fulfilling their liability, they could be subjected to imprisonment ranging from three years to five years or fine ranging from Rs three to five lakhs only or both. This is a new practice in the context of Nepal. No such provisions for making the producer or importer, carrier or hoarder or seller or service provider liable were there in the earlier Act.

Consumer rights at the time of COVID-19

In context of the current pandemic, goods ought to be made easily available to consumers. In the wake of the news that masks, gloves, sanitisers and medicines are not being made easily available, in addition to the above, recourse also lies under the Black Marketing and Some Other Social Offences and Punishment Act, 2032 (1975). Under the said Act, activities such as black-marketing, profiteering, hoarding and artificial shortage, adulteration of medicines and selling of medicines are punishable with fines from Rs. One to ten lakhs and imprisonment from one to ten years.

In conclusion, consumer rights as enshrined in the CPA are progressive. However, its effectiveness lies in its implementation. Despite having proper legal mechanism to address illegal practices such as black marketing, it is still a recurring phenomenon during the COVID-18. For effective implementation of these laws, it is imperative to spread education and educate our consumers. **B**



Bhawani Rana, President , FNCCI

Nepal is yet to feel the gravity of this global pandemic. The economy is bound to endure a huge blow. We have asked experts from every sector to prepare a complete report on the subject. So far, the tourism sector has been the most affected. I think the hotel industry won't be operational for another six months. The supply chains in all industries have been disrupted. Thousands of people are going to be jobless in the aftermath. Foreign employment rates will decline so the unemployment rate is set to spike. We are yet to see the end result of this situation so I cannot give you exact numbers. But the economy is sure to suffer. The duration of this lockdown depends on what happens in India. **B**

I think the hotel industry won't be operational for another six months. The supply chains in all industries have been disrupted. Thousands of people are going to be jobless in the aftermath. Foreign employment rates will decline so the unemployment rate is set to spike.

BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY IN EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN IN NEED

Text: Ankita Jain

Building local trust, forging partnerships with government, and ensuring sustainability are the major elements intrinsic of different NGOs and INGOs working in educational projects in the country. And it requires more than just fundraising to create sustainable futures.

BlinkNow

In 2007, Maggie Doyne and Top Malla co-founded BlinkNow Foundation to serve the needs of Nepal's children. Doyne wanted to do more than just pay for tuition fees of the underprivileged children. She came to Nepal as a young student and what she experienced trekking through the country impacted the direction of her life forever. With USD 5000 from her savings while babysitting children back home, she purchased land in Surkhet. The local Nepali community helped her establish the home's foundation. She also had supporters from her hometown in Mendham, New Jersey, USA. The Foundation fulfills its mission by providing financial support and management oversight to the Children's Home and Kopila Valley School in Surkhet, Nepal. In addition to the home and school, there is a Health Clinic and a Women's Center for the Kopila Valley

community.

Established in Surkhet, the Kopila Valley School provides free, quality education to more than 400 students. Not all the children are orphans, but they are all from disadvantaged or impoverished backgrounds. In addition to education, the Foundation also provides 'zero interest loans' to some of the students to help them reach their goals. These students can then choose to continue their studies with vocational training or undergraduate studies. "Our hope is that our students will become the future farmers, doctors, engineers, teachers, business owners, and architects that will uplift their communities and bring positive development to the country," says Maggie Doyne, Co-Founder and the driving force of BlinkNow.

Each year BlinkNow creates a budget for its five main program areas, and operational costs that together combine their overall fundraising goal for the year. Any donation that is made to the organisation with a restriction is 100% designated to that area. Doyne explains, "For example, a small or large gift to our children's home can only be funneled to the children's home program. Any donation that is made without a designation allows us to use it to our greatest needs. This allows us the flexibility



to ensure all our programs are funded." For any fund that comes in, it has to come through their sponsor program named Roots. It enables the supporters to sign up for a recurring monthly donation. "Our supporter base is mainly from individual people and

families. Through Roots, members give \$5 up to \$1,000 a month to support our children," she states. This strategy supports the foundation all year long. Besides, it participates in big philanthropic days like #GivingTuesday which is their single largest fundraising day



IN 2007, MAGGIE DOYNE AND TOP MALLA CO-FOUNDED BLINKNOW FOUNDATION TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF NEPAL'S CHILDREN. SHE CAME TO NEPAL AS A YOUNG STUDENT AND WHAT SHE EXPERIENCED TREKKING THROUGH THE COUNTRY IMPACTED THE DIRECTION OF HER LIFE FOREVER.



of the year. This day alone can support up to 10% of their annual budget. Talking about Nepali donors, she shares, “We have a growing donor base in Nepal. Hotel owners, small business owners, community members, and people who have heard our story, have decided to support directly within Nepal.”

Alike other NGOs, BlinkNow also applies for grants throughout the year; participate in paid speaking opportunities at conferences; and engages families who are looking to make a big impact in Nepal through large philanthropic giving. They ensure their projects do not get hampered in the absence of funding pouring from patrons and grants, Doyné has a prompt reply. “We built a green school and this way we are cutting expenses one by one.” The Kopila School features solar

power, rainwater harvesting, organic farming, and rammed earth buildings that stay cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Keeping energy costs low, the foundation is moving towards sustainability.

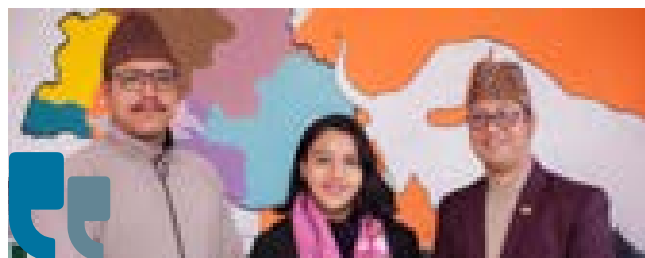
Snow Yak Foundation

Snow Yak was formally established by Binod Shahi and a group of self-motivated youth as a non-government organisation in 2014. Before the Foundation came into picture, Shahi was volunteering as a teacher in Dolpa since 2004. Today, the main objective of Snow Yak is to provide quality education in Dolpa. The foundation supports 20 schools in the region.

Snow Yak Foundation runs two major campaigns- Children for Children and Fellowship. Children for Children focuses on collecting stationery and books from around 35 schools in Kathmandu and circulates them in Dolpa. Under Fellowship campaign, every year a number of determined youths join the Foundation in the journey to educate children of Dolpa. “The fellows endure geographical adversity and many other challenges and dedicate 6-8 months of their life to the children of Dolpa,” says Binod Shahi, Founder of Snow Yak Foundation. This year they received 70 application, out of which 12 individuals will be selected. The remuneration paid to every fellow for their 6-8 months contribution is Rs 70,000. “We view this cost as not for the fellow but for the education of around 60 children,” explains Shahi. There are 1240 students in total. The overall cost of running one school in lower Dolpa and upper Dolpa is around Rs 3 lakhs and Rs 4 lakhs respectively.

Out of 20 schools listed under Snow Yak, 12 are fully taken care by the Foundation and the rest are supported via stationery. Next year, they are reducing the number of schools from 12 to 10. “Locals are also taking initiatives and we are running short on funds,” shares Shahi.

Snow Yak accepts funds



MOVING TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY, SNOW YAK FOUNDATION IS WORKING TO ESTABLISH A SELF-SUSTAINED DOLPA PROMOTING EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP COHESIVELY.

from Nepali nationals only.

“When we are approached by international donors, we route them to other organisations which accept foreign funds and are doing good work in Dolpa,” he states.

To run all the activities smoothly, Snow Yak requires Rs 60 lakhs. And the annual collection averages Rs 25 lakhs or lower and they must survive on it. “To cope, we cut down on administration and other costs which can be controlled. At times we aren’t capable of paying the fellows as well. We also go for barter where possible,” he shares. The foundation does not have big donors. “Every year, Citizen Bank contributes Rs one lakh as part of their CSR, Shikshya Foundation contributes Rs three lakhs annually and many individuals and families comprise our donor list,” he states. Besides, Summit Air sponsors flight tickets from Nepalgunj to Dolpa of their fellows. Further, there is an additional cost of Rs 30,000 to reach lower Dolpa and Rs 50,000 to reach upper Dolpa. This cost is cut down to half due to their goodwill and collaborations. “We have earned people over the years,” he smiles.

Moving towards sustainability, Snow Yak Foundation is working to establish a self-sustained Dolpa promoting education and entrepreneurship cohesively. “In the future, we plan to transform our project in Dolpa from solely funded Nepali school to locally funded school,” he

claims. In this model, parents trade locally produced goods as fees for the education of their children. The products are sold in Kathmandu and the income raised is reinvested into the project. Apart from this, they are also promoting tourism by organising treks in the region. “All the arrangements for the treks will be made by local people and includes guides and porters from the same region,” he explains.

Teach For Nepal

Teach For Nepal (TFN) is a non-profit organisation that is part of the Teach For All network. Under their fellowship program, they recruit college graduates and working professionals to serve as full-time teachers in public schools for two years. Teach For Nepal aims to end the problem of educational inequity in the country and provide education excellence to all children. Established in 2013, the organisation works with 65 schools and has 138 fellows currently taking their mission forward.

Starting from Lalitpur district, Teach for Nepal has spread to seven districts in seven years. The two year fellowship program benefits not only the children but also the fellows. TFN offers an attractive incentive package for selected fellows. The package includes leadership training opportunities, financial incentives, internship and the possibility of job placements as well as opportunities for scholarships and graduate

studies (for a Master's degree) in prestigious colleges and universities in Nepal and abroad. "Their two-year contribution is a complete investment towards their career," says Swastika Shrestha, Co-founder and CEO, Teach For Nepal.

Partnering with local government, TFN is drawing attention towards the quality of education in public schools. "The local government puts in some money and works mutually," Shrestha briefs. Not only inside the school premises but the fellows also work towards the upliftment of the community. Citing one such case, she recalls, "To end discrimination between lower and upper castes, one of our fellows introduced the concept of homestay in the community and it brought about a massive change."

Talking about funds, last year the annual report of the organisation showed total funds received at Rs 6 crores 99 lakhs approximately and the total expenses was around Rs 7 crores 3 lakhs. "The difference is covered by cutting on the expenses," she says. The fund raising policy of TFN is such that it receives 70% funds from Nepali donors and the rest 30% from the foreign grants. The organisation has 250-300 individual donors, people who donate every day, corporate houses, banks, etc. "HH Bajaj has been supporting us since day one. Surya Nepal is another big contributor," she adds. Besides, TFN staff contribute 1% of their salary for the cause.

People also donate during special occasions like birthdays, anniversary, etc. "There was a couple who collected Rs 10 lakhs and donated it to us rather than spending it on their wedding," she informs. The organisation also campaigns during Dashain and other festivals and accepts donation through their website, eSewa and more.

TFN majorly channelises the fund in three fields: recruitment, training and alumni support. When the training, stipend and other investment on a fellow is calculated, it turns out that a fellow costs Rs 7.5 lakhs per year. Similarly, through a fellow, the organisation is spending Rs 400 per student per year. "It's less than what a cup of coffee costs you," she says. On the other hand, alumni support covers the contribution of past fellows towards the community.

Addressing the sustainability plan of the organisation, Shrestha believes their contribution towards a better future and a better community is supported by numerous people. "Our sustainability plan is that we strive on people's compassion. As long as people believe in generosity, we will sustain," she claims.

Srijanalaya

Srijanalaya is a non-profit, non-government organisation established to create safe spaces of learning through the arts. They are a growing community of artists and



educators in the country who offer creative mediums as an alternative approach to rote-learning and static textbooks. They engage children and their communities in visual, performing, and language arts workshops, exhibitions, and performances during which they consciously incorporate diverse indigenous and local art forms and materials as much as possible. Established in 2014, the organisation is currently working majorly in Sindhupalchowk. Altogether Srijanalaya works with 34 schools from grade one to five.

Srijanalaya as an organisation works on two major programs- ArtWorks! Sangai Khelaun and Art-in-school. Artworks! *Sangai Khelaun* is carried out in public schools outside the Kathmandu Valley. An essential component of the program is to ensure that the content, expressive mediums, and language reflect the students' lived realities.

"We encourage schools to build their own local curriculum and incorporate creative and storytelling mediums from the community, such as indigenous dance and music," says Sharareh Bajracharya, Founder, Srijanalaya. Over the years, the use of these mediums in school has helped bridge the void between children's homes and school. This program began in the aftermath of the April 2015 earthquake and is supported by Shikshya Foundation Nepal.

On the other hand, Art-in-school is a program that focuses on how to bring the creative arts into the formal education system in Nepal. The organisation has designed a month-long practical training package where they integrate the arts as a medium of instruction into a subject area such as math, science, social studies or language arts. "Through teacher training program, we are trying to make our mission self-sustainable,"



THE FUND RAISING POLICY OF TFN IS SUCH THAT IT RECEIVES 70% FUNDS FROM NEPALI DONORS AND THE REST 30% FROM THE FOREIGN GRANTS.



claims Bajracharya.

Srijanalaya contributes towards lesson plans and the organisation is working to document a resource manual for teachers. It will include teaching methods used by different teachers and how they can use it as a reference in the future. As an organisation, they are investing on available resources rather than introducing a new element in the system.

It is always three years collaboration with any school Srijanalaya is working with. The team believes it is after those three years that they can actually evaluate the progress. "The three year term has been carefully planned to make the program progressive and it is upto the school to continue further," says Niranjan Kunwar, a member of Srijanalaya and an independent educational consultant and writer.

To raise funds, Srijanalaya works for different projects; the

Children's Book project under Asia Foundation being one of them. "This is their second year of commitment," she informs. Besides, a trust fund of Bajracharya's family also helps. "It is a small fund but we have been relying on it for the past few years now. We have limited fund," she shares. The organisation plans to expand its programs and they realise that more funds are required. They are finding means to collaborate with like-minded people and bring about change. "We are a team of artists ourselves and lack the mindset required for raising fund," she says. She emphasises that administration cost is the most difficult part of fund raising. "No one wants to pay this cost. People don't realise that no organisation can sustain for long without this."

Srijanalaya also does annual fundraising programs. "This is our second year. And we are hoping to raise sufficient funds," she explains. Similarly, Daya Foundation has committed to support one school for three years. The cost of conducting program in one school per year is Rs 4 lakhs which includes every need," she states. Can Help Nepal is another like-minded organisation working with Srijanalaya. The plan is to conduct programs in five schools of Suryabinayak in the next three years.

Shikshya Foundation Nepal

Shikshya Foundation Nepal was established in 2011 by New York based Fashion Designer Prabal Gurung with his siblings Pravesh Gurung and Kumudini Gurung Shrestha, and friends Rati Shah, Rupali Golchha and Riva Thapa. The executive board comprises of Rati Shah, Kumudini Gurung Shrestha, Rupali Golchha and Riva Thapa. They collectively decide on the work scope and implement the programs voluntarily with zero overheads. All donations go to implement specific projects. The Foundation works to provide holistic growth to children, addressing their financial, social and emotional



SRIJANALAYA CONTRIBUTES TOWARDS LESSON PLANS AND THE ORGANISATION IS WORKING TO DOCUMENT A RESOURCE MANUAL FOR TEACHERS. IT WILL INCLUDE TEACHING METHODS USED BY DIFFERENT TEACHERS AND HOW THEY CAN USE IT AS A REFERENCE IN THE FUTURE.

needs. SFN has partnered with six foundations and supports individual scholarships to many students from different parts of the country.

Starting with girl education, Shikshya Foundation Nepal first partnered with Early Childhood Development Center in 2011. SFN supports the education of all 23 girls at Butterfly Home run by ECDC. "SFN seeks to oversee and facilitate the education of children in need from primary school through secondary school and higher education," says Kumudini Gurung Shrestha. SFN provides counseling to every student they support and ensures that their financial and emotional needs are catered to.

SFN identifies partner organisation and support the various projects they run. "We support Artworks!

Sangai Khelaun program of Srijanalaya in 29 schools of Sindhupalchowk," shares Riva Thapa. Similarly, SFN started supporting Snow Yak Foundation even before it was officially registered. SFN looks into long term partnership from every partner foundation. "For many of our partners we have been a consistent supporter," informs Rupali Golchha.

Earlier the foundation was supported by a few business houses in the country but later, the fundraising aspect was shifted to the New York team and the implementation of the programs is carried out from the capital. In terms of transparency, SFN makes sure that every partner foundation shares a report of how the fund is being channelised. **B**



THE FOUNDATION WORKS TO PROVIDE HOLISTIC GROWTH TO CHILDREN, ADDRESSING THEIR FINANCIAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS.

“The automotive paint market is very fragmented in Nepal. The study says the market lies between 1.5 billion but we are sure it is much bigger. Assuming this to be our focus, we are looking at 20% market share and to grow gradually”



Sharad Malhotra
Senior Vice President, Nipsea Group

Sharad Malhotra is the Senior Vice President of Nipsea Group. Malhotra is a strategic business leader with multi-dimensional experience across India, China, South Asia, South East Asia, Middle East and Australia. He started India business operations in 2011 and expanded to US\$ 27 million revenue in 2017 taking the business to the top five position in the market. He founded Nipsea Group Automotive Refinishes in 2014 and established R&D capability, product lines, technical support and supply chains. Further, he expanded business to 22 markets from 11 by end 2017. Malhotra seized control of the Thailand business in 2015 and

guided it to market leadership while expanding profitability three times. He has also turned around the traditional markets of Philippines, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

Nippon Paint India is a leading producer of high-quality paints and coatings for automotive refinish, industrial and decorative sectors. Nippon Paint India is part of the Nipsea Group which together with Nippon Paint of Japan, forms the largest coatings group in Asia Pacific and the fourth largest in the world in terms of revenue.

During the launch of Nippon Paints in the capital, Sharad Malhotra in an interview with B360's Ankita

Jain talks about the scope of automotive paint market in the country. Excerpts:

Why did Nippon Paints decide to enter Nepal?

In 2014, a new group was set up within the company with an aim to focus on the expansion of the automotive business in different parts of Asia. I was appointed as the head of that group and it was post 2014 that we started expanding to countries like Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, Middle East, etc. Despite the centre of business being India, we actually missed the opportunity in our neighbouring country, Nepal. I believe it's better late

than never kind of situation. We always wanted to be in Nepal but we never put in our energies here. Last year, we decided to conduct a market research in Nepal to identify partners and based on that we are here today.

The company has launched the N-power series in the Nepali market. Will the green products of Nippon Paints also be made available here?

Those products which we call greener have very less percentage of Volatile Organic Compound content. VOCs are harmful for humans and the environment. The other line is water borne products. Currently these products aren't available

in the Nepal market. We will be introducing them in the coming years. We are introducing budget line under the N-power series. It has been launched globally for the first time in the Nepal market. Through the launch we want to see the market upgrade from old fashioned technology to newer aged technology.

What is the USP of Nippon Paints?

We like to tailor make products for every country depending on their needs. The N-power series is made keeping in mind the price factor for the Nepali market. We are offering a premium product at an affordable price. The automotive range offered here is a great value product.

What percentage of the market share are you targeting?

The automotive paint market is very fragmented in Nepal. The study says the market lies between 1.5 billion but we are sure it is much bigger. Assuming this to be our focus, we are looking at 20% market share and grow gradually. Over the period of three years we are sure we will be a dominant player in the automotive paint market in Nepal. Hence, we are not here to be a player rather we want to be the market leader.

Nippon Paints is recognized for their local manufacturing unit. Any plans for a setup in Nepal?

Currently, we are feeding the Nepal market from India. We have a manufacturing unit in India. As the market response to our products here grows, we will definitely consider having a setup in the country too though it is not in our immediate plans. As a company, we have more than 67 manufacturing units in different parts of the world.

What is the N-power series target audience and market?

We have been doing market research in Nepal since last July. We wanted to evaluate the exact needs and requirements of the market. Over this period we analysed that the market

needs upgradation. As part of our overall marketing strategy, we would like to bring in the state of the art technology with whatever global innovations we have. The best quality products and be the end to end solution provider. Our primary target audiences are garage owners, importers, distributors, etc. Further the products will be available across 600 body and paint shops. There are also plans to on-board 50 new dealers, with at least 10 focusing on Nippon's core superior colour mixing system by the year-end. We want to build a community and bring them on a common platform offering the technology and products.

We aren't just looking to doing business in the market, we also want to invest in the market. In the coming years, we have plan to establish a training centre so that people do not have to travel outside of the country for training. We want to select certain paint technicians from Nepal and bring them on a wider platform. To represent Nepal on the world map is something we would strive for.

In India and globally, we have authorised tie ups with Tata Motors, Ford, Mahindra First Choice and Nissan. We are also the OEM paint suppliers of Toyota Japan. In Nepal we have done successful trials with Hyundai and Mahindra. Probably by year end we will enter the two wheeler segment as well.

Globally, decorative segment contributes 50 % of our total turnover and another 23-25% comes from automotive OEM. In Nepal, automotive is just the first step, there will be further additions to it. We will be entering into wood coatings, industrial coatings and the cartage segment. **B**

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“The Nepali government has a crucial role to play if the existing carpet companies are to prosper. Most companies that produce rugs in Nepal cannot afford to present their products to the rest of the world through international fairs and exhibitions. The Nepalese government can take a cue from other countries like Morocco that support the weavers by investing in promotional activities”.



Anne Tönsmann
Teppichhaus Tönsmann

“A single touch is enough to tell a good carpet from bad,” says Anne Tönsmann, the fifth generation leader of her family business in Germany called Teppichhaus Tönsmann, one of the leading importers of carpets in Germany. An avid lover of art and culture, Tönsmann has an affinity for Nepal that goes beyond business. Her love of Nepali aesthetics is evident in the decor that graces some sections of her carpet museum in Germany. According to her, the Nepalese carpet industry can catapult to new heights with adequate media promotion and government support. Excerpts of an interview with **Kareena Koirala** of **B360**:

Your family has been in the carpet business since 1885. What are the key changes that you have noticed in the market as a 5th generation business leader?

Over the years, the carpet industry has witnessed a plethora of changes. There was a time when the carpet industry was significantly more popular than any other flooring industry. Today, consumers have plenty of flooring options to choose from like hardwood, engineered wood, bamboo, ceramic tiles, laminate and much more. While many agree that these variants are easy to maintain and clean, rugs and carpets lavish much praise not only for their beauty but also because they are the symbols of native creativity.

After the Savonnerie and the Aubusson style carpets were introduced to the world during Louis XIV's reign in France in the mid 1600s, Europe witnessed a growth in

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the rug-weaving industry. It was during the Sun King's reign that a great variety of European rug styles emerged. Over the centuries, more elaborate patterns were created with gradual improvements in design and weaving.

My family has been in the carpet business since 1885. My father got into the business in 1960 and today we are the largest handmade carpet collectors in Germany. Most of my imports originate from developing countries including Nepal. European imports have been fluctuating throughout the years. The carpet market size was projected to expand at a CAGR of 3.0% from 2019 to 2025 and in the emerging markets, consumers have more disposable money to spend on home aesthetics and decorations. So in the coming years, the imports are expected to stabilise further if the economic conditions are favourable.

Have Tönsmann's core values changed over time?

Tönsmann has been the market leader in Germany when it comes to providing top-notch services that are solely focused on carpets and rugs. Not only do we provide our clients with the best quality rugs and carpets from around the world but we also bring them specialised maintenance services at their homes. These are the attributes that made us stand out in the market. Delivering the best products and services is something that will never change for us.

In an industry where most of the big carpet companies like Beaulieu and Axminster have died down, Tönsmann continues to be the top seller of exquisite carpets in Germany. What measures did you take to survive?

When we talk about the downfall of the carpet industry, we mostly take the American industry into account. Germany is one of the leading importers of carpets in Europe, but what makes Tönsmann different is our specialised service that revolves solely around carpets and rugs. We provide custom manufacturing



services to our clients. Years of experience has made it possible for us to customize carpets according to our clients' needs. Our nationwide onsite service with expert consultants is what brings our customers back.

When you go to furniture stores in Germany, you can see that most of them only sell furniture and no rugs. Should you find rugs in those stores, they are made out of plastic or cheap materials. I have also noticed that machine made rugs are gaining popularity in the market because they have a low price tag. As attractive as they may seem, they don't last very long.

Since premium carpets are gaining popularity again - thanks to the awareness spread by the digital media and print publications - people are leaning towards purchasing quality carpets that last for decades. Currently, the carpet industry is doing good with more and more people opting for quality rather than cheap prices. Our company has kept in touch with weavers since the early 80's to ensure that we get the best quality carpets. That is the main reason why Tönsmann has been able to survive.

Have you noticed a change in the purchasing habits of your customers in terms of style?

What I have noticed is that the market trend varies from one country to another. For instance, the American market is very colourful as compared to other countries. These days, people are more into bohemian designs and minimalistic geometric patterns. To adapt to these changes, we keep ourselves updated with the latest trends. However what really keeps us on our toes is client feedback. Since we go to a lot of fairs in Germany, we get to interact with people with an appetite for exquisite carpets and rugs. Their feedback and response are essential for us since they are the ones who we cater to.

Nepal is one of the main suppliers of carpet for Tönsmann. What are the attributes of the products that stand out?

The Nepalese carpet industry produces both traditional and well as modern rugs with impeccable quality. Their marvelous patterns and attractive colours make them unique. The contemporary Nepali rugs are as famous as the traditional ones in the European market because they complement the modern aesthetics so well. Another reason why they are so famous is that Nepalese rugs are unbeatable in terms of durability.

How can the existing carpet companies in Nepal up their game?

In my opinion, the Nepali government has a crucial role to play if the existing carpet companies are to prosper. Most companies that produce rugs in Nepal cannot afford to present their products to the rest of the world through international fairs and exhibitions. The Nepalese government can take a cue from other countries like Morocco that support the weavers by investing in promotional activities.

I have also experienced that it is tough for international exporters to send handmade rugs back to Nepal for fixing and mending purposes. Making the whole process easier would be a relief. I have a deep and personal connection with Nepal that goes beyond business, but sometimes I find it hard to cope with the unmanaged system. It is high time for the world to know what Nepal has to offer.

What is your bestseller?

Frankly, it all depends on the clients' tastes and preferences. Modern Nepali rugs definitely make the list.

How can one tell a good carpet from the bad?

Always look for a higher density to see how close together the fibers are tufted. Tuft twist of five or higher indicates that a carpet is durable. The texture of the carpet depends upon the materials that have been used for production so always make sure that you make a purchase from a trusted source only.

Could you share some tips on keeping carpets and rugs in mint condition...

- Regular cleaning is the best way to ensure that your carpet lasts long
- Use carpet pads that are at least as dense as $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
- Give your rugs a good wash every few years because no matter how much you take care of them, dust always gets through them
- Seek professional services in case your carpet has burns or permanent stain. It's always a good idea to fix wear and tear as soon as possible **B**

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KATHMANDU WORLD SCHOOL HELPING CHILDREN UNLEASH THEIR POTENTIAL

Text: Kareena Koirala



In a world where phrases like “holistic education” are strung together only to be limited to brochures, Kathmandu World School begs to differ. From the moment you enter the school premises, there is an aura of curious energy that surrounds you. Noisy classrooms, keen kids running around, and courts that come alive with dunks as sprightly young players tear down the basketball rim with oomph... this is the constant energy of the school.

Upon readjusting the focus on the students, one can see that

they aren't your typical school kids. They have a mischievous gleam in their eyes, and yet they are grounded. They seem reckless as they lay on the grass and talk to their peers, but the views they hold about the world around them are truly profound. “Every student in KWS is nurtured in such a way that they can discover their greatest potential,” says the school Principal, Dr. Rajeev Chhetri. “We help them unleash their gifts and help them become a better version of themselves.”

Nestled in a green

valley surrounded by hills in Surya Binayak, Gundu, Bhaktapur, Kathmandu World School boasts a worldclass infrastructure spread over seven acres of land. While the first phase of construction is complete, the rest of the project is expected to be fully constructed in the near future. In all its grandness, KWS seems like a place that could successfully facilitate conducive learning, all while allowing the students to explore and learn independently. Excerpts of an interview with the Principal.

What makes this location ideal for a school establishment?

When a group of the leading Nepalese educationists and entrepreneurs conceived an idea of establishing a semi-residential school a few years ago, they decided that the best location for it would be the outskirts of Kathmandu valley where the serene environment could facilitate quality learning. Every building in this school is purpose-built, so the designers had plenty of space to work around. This area is pollution-free and the kids have an



monitoring their growth.

Like many other progressive schools in Nepal, our classrooms are well-equipped with projectors and gadgets to aid visual learning. But what makes us different is that we let the children collaborate as they learn. We encourage them to talk to their friends about the things they learn in the classroom and there are a lot of discussion sessions every day. At KWS, one will never find a silent classroom where the teacher teaches and the students nod their heads without active participation. From early on, we instill the value of networking and communication in them so that they grow up to be strong individuals who can connect with everyone across the world.

When you say that you bring out the best in students, what measures do you take?

Many parents would be devastated if their child's academic performance is not up to the par. Although many have come to understand that a child is not a failure if they are good at what they really want to pursue in life, most of us still believe that good grades are synonymous with a good future. It is true that getting good grades in school signifies that a child is smart and disciplined

For instance, if a child is exceptional in basketball but lags behind in Math, we do not discourage them by saying that they are a bad student. Instead, we focus on what can be done to make learning easier for them. Even if they don't ace their test at the end of the day, we still encourage them to follow their heart and become a better basketball player. That being said, we recognize the value of education and grades. So we try our very best to make learning a fun experience for them.

Tell us about the extra-curricular activities at KWS.

From the primary level, we lay the foundation for the kids and make them participate in every activity like music classes, sports, and physical exercises so that everybody learns a little of everything. After the fourth grade, we let them choose that they are really interested in and train them accordingly. Our infrastructure, including futsal ground, basketball court, music room, auditorium, art class, and swimming pool, allows the students to have plenty of choices.

Besides that, we have graphic designing and coding classes starting from the third grade. We have collaborated with an organisation called 3D Eye, and they use their tools to familiarise the kids with the basics of art and design.

How do you assess a child's performance?

We do not have an examination system for kids before the fourth grade. Once the kids reach the fourth grade, they have a short unit test that helps them get into the habit of studying more seriously. During the early years, it's more about learning, expressing, and participating in the classroom.

Do parents stay in the loop?

Communication with parents is our topmost priority. We maintain a sound

“EVERY STUDENT IN KWS IS NURTURED IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY CAN DISCOVER THEIR GREATEST POTENTIAL.”

**DR. RAJEEV CHHETRI
PRINCIPAL**

relationship with the parents and regularly talk to them about their child's performance and growth. We have individual digital messaging groups for all our classrooms.

What about their diet?

The students have three meals in the school: breakfast, lunch, and snacks. Since we are located on the outskirts of the city, there are many organic farms around the area. So, the entire school enjoys a wide selection of fresh vegetables and local produce here. We have options for both veg and non-veg selection. Since every kid has the same food in school, nobody feels left out or isolated. From the principal to the staff members, everybody eats the same food here.

The kids sure look relaxed and happy around here. KWS is a young school. How has the response been so far?

I think the greatest achievement that we have so far is that students absolutely love coming to school. In fact, they hate it when the holiday arrives! So far, we have received positive feedback from the parents as well. Since the school is so young, we are always experimenting with different things. We have students coming in from different parts of the country here. So, all in all, the response has been pretty amazing.

abundance of space to play around the school. Also, since the fresh air and the greenery around the school are soothing.

What makes this school different from other residential schools in Nepal?

While many other schools still follow the traditional teaching-learning approach, we have a blend of traditional as well as progressive learning. We have the best of both worlds in terms of curriculum. The teachers at KWS supplement the national curriculum with international teaching-learning practices.

Currently, KWS boasts one of the best faculty team in Nepal. We have a rigorous hiring process. The teachers are required to have an ideal knowledge base and experience in order to qualify to be a part of our team. In the



end, it all boils down to how good they are with teaching kids and actually making them understand the core concepts while simultaneously

enough to memorise everything that has been taught in school, but they can truly grow only when they explore their true potential.



Oil Markets: Reeling Under Twin Effects



Vivek Risal is associated with Mercantile Exchange Nepal Limited in the capacity of Manager in Research and Development Department. He can be contacted at r&d@mexnepal.com

When 2019 came to an end, one market that was smiling amidst the chaos was the oil market. However, as the first quarter of 2020 draws to a close, the scenario has changed dramatically as the global village enters into a lockdown due to the global pandemic. Subsequently, the oil markets have taken a beating owing to sinking demand levels and the glut in supply equations. In retrospect, crude oil had stepped into 2020 with a value of \$61.45 per barrel. The prices have since slumped and reached the lowest price of \$20.04 per barrel on March 18. Another factor attributing to the lowering of the rate is the price war launched by Saudi Arabia against its once ally Russia. The unfortunate turn of events was played out in early March as the global markets were already in panic due to the novel corona virus outbreak.

With the supply already in overdrive, the world surplus could attain 20 million barrels per day (mbd) in the next couple of weeks. The rippling effects could threaten not only the storage capacities everywhere but could also crash prices further and

eventually shut oil production. The developments in the past few weeks in the US and the policy response to it have implied that the fall in US demand could be as high as 7 mbd in the worst month according to an analyst associated with Standard Chartered.

The weakening of the situation in the US is throwing forecasts out of the window.

longer able to offset the decline, the aforementioned parties would be the most affected due to the sustained period of lower prices.

In official estimates, the oil storage levels across the global storage facilities have climbed to about three-quarters full on an average since the January shutdown of major refineries in China to curtail the outbreak of the virus.

The global oversupply of oil is expected to surge further in April when an agreement between the OPEC oil cartel and Russia to limit oil production is due to end. With the end of the deal, Saudi Arabia will be able to compete in the race with Russia to grab a greater share of the market in terms of oil production. Market pundits have estimated that the world has about 7.2 billion



In a recent forecast on March 17, Standard Chartered had estimated a global surplus of 13.4 mbd in April but now the surplus could exceed 20 mbd. The staggering revisit to the forecasts could signal that storage capacity could fill up by the end of the year. However, the short-run effects remain the same: prices are likely to fall further and the higher-cost supply will need to be closed down.

Market analysts have opined that the following three could be most vulnerable in the current situation: Canadian oil sands, the North Sea and the Latin American group. With further supply reductions coming from the US Shale when completions are no

Canada may also be days away from running out of stock for its domestic oil production as per reputed analysts; and the rest of the world may follow suit in the upcoming months. Analysts expect that oil-rich regions in West Canada will require to rein in production by approx. 400,000 barrels of oil a day by the end of March.

Many experts believe that the global oil industry may look to offshore oil tankers to store their extra crude oil but for this to be a viable and economic solution, prices would have to fall further. The quest for affordable oil storage will be even more difficult after Saudi Arabia's 'vessel booking spree' which has pushed freight rates higher.

barrels of crude and products in storage, including 1.3 to 1.4 billion barrels onboard oil tankers at sea. In theory, it would take an estimated nine months to fill the remaining oil storage stores. But due to numerous constraints, the numbers will shorten this window to only a few months.

In hindsight, the oil industry is expected to continue filling its oil storages with crude in the months ahead as the pandemic's economic contagion spreads to the rest of the world, limiting demand for the numerous natural resources including oil. Crude oil falling to \$10 per barrel - a plausible possibility - given the state of affairs in the world today. **B**



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“NEPAL DOES NOT HAVE ENOUGH KITS TO TEST SO THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE SYMPTOMS BUT LIKELY TO HAVE CONTACT ARE NOT TESTED. IF YOU HAVE NOT TESTED, THEN YOU ARE NOT GOING TO FIND THE CASES. THIS LEADS TO HIGH CHANCES OF UNREPORTED CASES”

RESHMA TULADHAR, PhD

MICROBIOLOGIST & ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AT CENTRAL DEPARTMENT OF MICROBIOLOGY, TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY.



Reshma Tuladhar, PhD is a Microbiologist and works as Assistant Professor at Central Department of Microbiology, Tribhuvan University. Her research focus is on Dengue (vector borne disease) and the dynamics of bacterial resistance. She is a Fulbright alumnus. In this edition of B360, Dr Tuladhar helps us debunk coronavirus myths and its implications for Nepal. Excerpts:

How should we understand the Coronavirus? What do we know about it and what are we yet to know?

The Novel Coronavirus also known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) is a newly emerged strain of Coronavirus not identified in humans earlier. This strain is closely related to SARS virus that emerged in 2003. Disease associated with SARS-

CoV-2 is COVID-19 and has been assumed to have high transmission rate compared to SARS. This virus has a unique mutation capability by virtue of which they evolve strategically to replicate in human and attribute to the severity of disease. The source of this virus has been assumed to be the bat but it has not been proven.

This virus spreads mainly through droplets of saliva or

nasal discharges the infected person sneezes or coughs. Infected person shows symptoms within 5-6 days or even after 14 days of infection. Not only does the person exhibiting symptoms spread the virus but pre-symptomatic person (who has been infected but symptoms not shown) can be contagious too. The virus can persist in environment for certain period of time but the exact time period they

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persist is still not concluded. So protecting ourselves by wearing protective gear such as mask and using gloves when required, avoid touching surfaces unless mandatory, hand washing and sanitising, avoiding crowds and contact with people, etc will be the best to avoid potential infection.

Till date there is no specific treatment or vaccine for COVID-19. Scientists are working to develop a vaccine and explore antiviral compounds against COVID-19. Clinical trials of antibody based therapeutics have been conducted.

We hear reports of hospitals in Nepal rejecting patients who show even the slightest symptom of the Coronavirus infection. Do you think this is ethical?

I am not sure how valid this claim is. Without knowing the reason why the hospitals rejected the patients, I cannot give my opinion. Is maybe because the hospital does not have enough facility or space which compelled them to reject the patient? When hospitals even in developed countries are facing inadequate numbers of ventilators, we can imagine what the situation here in Nepal will be if cases increase. On what grounds have the hospitals rejected should be considered rather than blaming them. Hospitals may already have admitted vulnerable patients who have contacted other diseases than COVID-19.

What are the advantages of lockdown in this situation?

The 2003 SARS outbreak in Singapore made them aware of the infrastructure to be built in case of an outbreak so they have already built well equipped isolation hospitals which make them prepared. When the first outbreak of Coronavirus was reported in Wuhan, China, Singapore started massive testing for virus. Anyone tested positive were kept in isolation in hospital. Those who had no symptoms but had contacts were kept under home quarantine with

tracing team periodically identifying where the person is. They maintained strict social distancing. Not all countries will have infrastructure similar to that prepared by Singapore or neither efficient tracing teams can be deployed. Thus the best option is lockdown where people will stay isolated. This will help people prevent contracting virus as well as an infected person transmitting it to another.

There are a lot of speculations on the low cases of coronavirus in Nepal as of date. What could be the reason?

Nepal does not have enough kits to test so those who do not have symptoms but likely to have contact are not tested. If you have not tested, then you are not going to find the cases. This leads to high chances of unreported cases. Till date six cases have been reported. The number might increase once the incubation period is over and the symptoms will surface. We don't know if it is yet to spread in the community but we cannot stay complacent about low cases being reported. Every individual needs to be alert and take preventive measures seriously.

What can the government do along with continuing the lockdown to contain the Coronavirus?

Increase efficiency in testing and easy access to the test. Suspected people and those possibly in contact should be mandatorily tested. Priority should be given to increase hospital facility to prepare should more cases surface. To prevent community spread, people who have recently travelled need to be tracked and observed but this is not easy to implement in our country. Facilitate purchase of daily supplies maintaining distance. In the meantime, it is also the duty of every citizen to be aware, maintain social distance and abide with the lockdown.

Is Nepal even ready to face an increase in number of Coronavirus cases?

I don't think so. It will be devastating if the number of cases increase. We do not have enough well equipped hospitals and facilities.

What are we not getting right?

Research is still ongoing to unravel numerous things about the Coronavirus. In the meantime, there has been a lot of misinformation and misinterpretation about the disease. Unless any valid conclusion has been drawn after scientific evidence from research, the claims cannot be accepted.

Despite the fact that COVID-19 was first reported in Wuhan in December 2019 with fish/animal market suspected to be the source, the true source is yet to be delineated. It is also very likely that there still might be unreported cases of COVID-19 which most of the time happens in case of other diseases too.

A lot of people are using their own preventive measures to fight against the Coronavirus. Is there anything that can be done to ready the body to fight such harmful microorganisms?

Drinking warm water or eating ginger will not fight against Coronavirus, it's a myth though warm water may soothe the throat temporarily. First thing is that this virus attacks the respiratory tract and lungs. When drinking warm water or eating ginger, it goes to digestive tract so there is no way virus can be flushed or ginger can act against it. Second, ginger does not possess antiviral effect. The only way virus is thwarted is by our immune system. Since there is no vaccine, it's our body immune system that helps eliminate the virus. Boosting our immune system can alleviate to some extent but again it is essential to prevent from getting infected in the first place.

What can we learn from how this virus was handled in countries like Italy and Spain or in India?

The main reason Italy and Spain were hard hit was their delay in response to the outbreak. They were complacent at the beginning. Lockdown was implemented late. Besides testing was not enough. Testing was done only on those showing symptoms unlike in countries in Asia like South Korea and Singapore. Claim has been made on the high number of old age citizens since they are immune compromised group. However, this is not the major factor (although it can have some effect). Take for instance Japan has the highest number of old aged people in the world but the death rate and cases were low.

On the other hand, the cases in the most populated country like India is relatively very low. But the numbers of cases reported from different states in India is on the rise but this rise is very low compared to what we are observing in the US currently. After observing Italy and Spain, India immediately implemented lockdown, shut borders and quarantined all incoming travelers. However, again there is still chance of it spreading in the community.

What are the things China did right and wrong in dealing with Covid-19?

In order to deal with COVID-19 China implemented strict lockdown which was proven to be effective since it dramatically reduced the cases, and is now being emulated by other nations too. They suspended transportation in and out of Wuhan and other epidemic cities.

Dr. Howard Markel, a physician at University of Michigan has said that China delayed in reporting when cases of infection were detected initially in Wuhan. Had it been reported earlier, control measures could have been implemented ahead containing the spread to this extent. **B**

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FOCUS ON PEOPLE DURING ECONOMIC CRISES, NOT MACRO-STATISTICS

Economics is not the same thing as statistics.



MARK HORNSHAW IS A LECTURER IN ECONOMICS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND MANAGEMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA.

Economics studies human choice under scarcity. Humans must act in the present to provide for the future. Informed choice relies on market data in the

form of prices—specific prices for specific things, as we assess various different means to satisfy our ends—that is what economics is about.

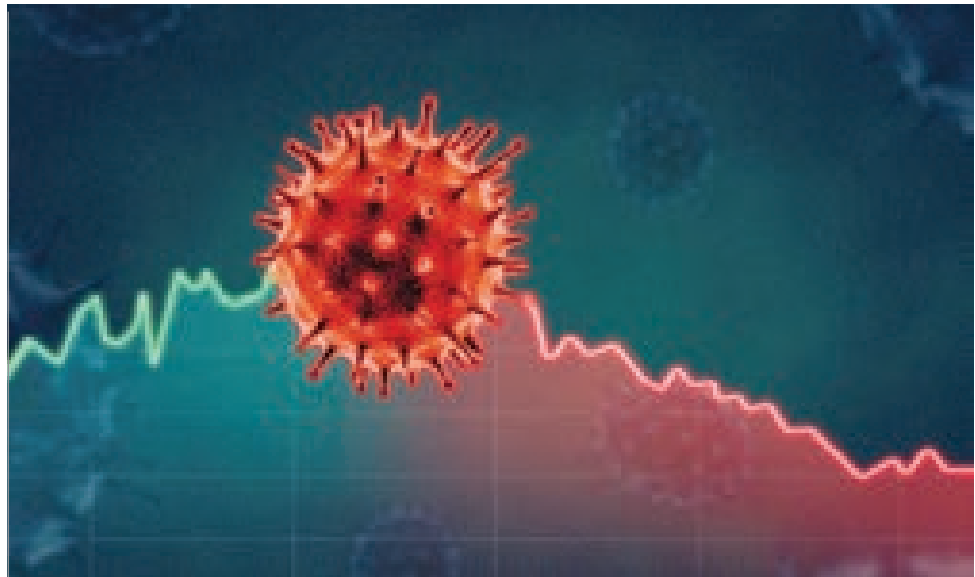
Macro-statistics such as GDP and CPI, whether they are rising or falling in the aggregate, do not help much with this vital task. These statistics are compilations of vast amounts of data to come up with averages across entire countries and time-periods. It's a dilution of the data, not an enhancement.

Scarcity, Supply, and Demand

Scarcity is always with us, but in a rapidly changing world, supply and demand conditions change, and people must respond. Right now there is a real supply shock. Entire industries—e.g. air travel, hospitality, live entertainment, and sports—are being prohibited by governments.

There are other industries facing a dramatic upswing right now—e.g. food distribution, medical supplies, health care services and online learning support—that are struggling to keep up with demand.

The official definition of recession is two consecutive quarters of negative GDP growth. (The unspoken definition of Depression is “What? Pfft, we are too clever for that these days, haha.”) Once the statisticians average out the industries facing upswing and those facing downswing over the next six months they will be able to ‘call’



it one way or the other, and it is almost certain to meet the criteria. But either way, their diagnosis will be irrelevant.

If you are in those jobs and industries facing downturns, you are personally facing a recession right now (or you can call it a depression, if you are bold enough). This is already a lived reality; you don't need a statistician to “look at the numbers” in six months time to decide. Nor will it help your predicament if in six months time they proudly assert “actually, it didn't meet our technical criteria, so nothing to worry about...”

Talk of Recession

A post-hoc diagnosis of recession is not something to be feared, as the pain will have been felt already anyway. And the (improbable) diagnosis of no technical recession is not something to be celebrated.

Talk of recession, some will accuse, is irresponsible. It will “cause people to get gloomy and decrease aggregate demand,” they will warn. But this is nonsense pop-psychology.

Talking about recession does not cause recession.

4 Talk of recession, some will accuse, is irresponsible. It will “cause people to get gloomy and decrease aggregate demand,” they will warn. But this is nonsense pop-psychology. Talking about recession does not cause recession.

Likewise saying good things about the economy does not restock supermarket shelves or lift prohibitions on air travel or live entertainment. Supply has decreased, suddenly and dramatically, so our consumption must decrease, by definition. You cannot consume something that does not exist, no matter how hard you wish for it.

Neither is a technical recession something governments should try to prevent, at the macro level. Our private responses at this time should be charity and neighborliness.

Government policy should be on mending holes in the social safety net, compensating those it has forced out of business and jobs, and reducing the tax and regulatory burden it places on businesses, workers and consumers as they try to adjust.

These are all microeconomic responses to relieve suffering and remove impediments.

“What a country wants to make it richer, is never consumption, but production. Where there is the latter, we may be sure that there is no want of the former,” said John Stuart Mill, citing Say's law.

But what in particular should we produce, and how? To answer this, we need a functioning price system.

During this time of greater material scarcity, we need to find the optimum path to a temporarily smaller economy. The one that—as well as possible—aligns with real and changing consumer demand patterns.

Prices Talk

In a time of rapid change and disruption, we need prices to do their job more than ever so the entrepreneurial process can work. High prices show which industries to move more resources into, and low prices show which ones to move resources out of to free them up for more urgent uses. From the point of view of consumers, high prices show us what we should cut back on, and low prices show where we can

pick up bargains. This process takes time. Interfering with this process just locks in shortages and surpluses.

Government attempts to “stabilise” the macro-statistics will not help, but have the potential to do serious harm. So-called “stimulus,” just thrown at “the economy” to increase “aggregate demand” in the abstract, cannot work, when there are supply constraints in some industries and prohibitions in others. Central banks cannot recreate the pre-crises status quo by printing money, and to try to is foolish. All it can do on the macro-level is to cause price inflation, which in times of recession is called stagflation.

Relative price changes allow people to make better decisions, but fiscal and monetary stimulus only interferes with these signals and clouds judgement, causing mis-allocation of resources and

4 Government policy should be on mending holes in the social safety net, compensating those it has forced out of business and jobs, and reducing the tax and regulatory burden it places on businesses, workers and consumers as they try to adjust.

mal-investment. It tries to prevent asset price falls and bank failures, but in the mean-time causes other prices to rise, out of sync with real customer demand patterns. Prices rise according to dodgy signals—with people closely connected to the centres of power in government and banking enjoying increased purchasing power at the expense of everybody else. Share market investors and property speculators avoid some pain, but retirees and savers are once again thrown under the bus.

To reiterate, this does not mean policy makers should “do nothing” while the economy adjusts. But their response should be targeted on relieving suffering for those who are suffering the most, not on trying to “even up” some macro-statistics. **B**

Source: fee.org

A NATION'S TRUE TEST COMES AFTER THE CRISIS

The best leaders know when to use power and when to rescind it.



LAWRENCE W. REED IS PRESIDENT EMERITUS, HUMPHREYS FAMILY SENIOR FELLOW, AND RON MANNERS AMBASSADOR FOR GLOBAL LIBERTY AT THE FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC EDUCATION. HE IS ALSO AUTHOR OF REAL HEROES: INCREDIBLE TRUE STORIES OF COURAGE, CHARACTER, AND CONVICTION AND EXCUSE ME, PROFESSOR: CHALLENGING THE MYTHS OF PROGRESSIVISM.

Perhaps it's natural and understandable for most people to think that things like “leadership” and “character” are forged and evidenced in response to crisis. It's quite apparent in the present moment that judgments about public figures are being shaped by how they're handling the virus pandemic.

Around

the world, people are generally, if grudgingly, embracing the “strong man” model. The “leader” who takes charge, issues orders, shuts things down, threatens punishment

and demands conformity earns applause; anything less runs the risk of criticism as “hesitant” or “weak.”

A deadly invasion, whether it be of visible armies or microscopic pathogens, requires extraordinary measures. Which ones make sense and which don't is certainly debatable and are not my focus here. I rise to urge my fellow citizens to judge leadership and character by more than crisis behaviour; it's what comes afterwards that often is the more critically important.

George Washington's finest hour was not on the battlefield of the Revolutionary War. He lost more battles than he won. His presidency was of average capability, notable for but a handful of accomplishments. No, his greatness for the ages sprung from the pivotal moments when he could have chosen power but declined. He was the King we fortunately never had, the man who set an example for free

4 How far we are willing to go to protect human rights is just as important a test of a nation's character as what we will do to protect human life.

people in eschewing permanent, concentrated power.

Writing in the March 30 edition of The Telegraph in London, Tim Stanley makes a powerful, related point. His column is headlined “Don't Panic And Don't Surrender Your Freedoms.” Stanley pleads with us all to “stay rational” and “maintain perspective”:

It is not fair to jump down the throat of every employer who tries to keep a business open; it is not right that the police are asking us to spy on rule breakers. If a journalist raises doubts about the strategy, it does not mean they don't care – they are expressing their right to dissent, often with courage. Fear is not conducive to rational debate. It is at times like these, when forced to watch the utter hysteria of television news, that you understand how a society talks itself into a war or a witch hunt.

And that is my second plea: let's not abandon our freedom. According to a Telegraph poll, 86%

of us are willing to give up our civil liberties to help beat the corona virus – and I think they mean (I hope they mean) temporarily and voluntarily, in which case I entirely agree. Self-sacrifice is good: the proper spirit should be “I am happy to stay at home if it helps save lives”. But it should not be “I will do as I’m told because I’m terrified and the state knows best”. If that’s the way a majority of us now think then, in the long run, we really are doomed. A society that does not instinctively cherish freedom will eventually lose it.

I say this not out of self-indulgence: on the contrary, I am practically a hermit and can live cooped up like this for as long as it takes. No, I am alarmed that powers of arrest and detention have been dramatically strengthened; that new jury trials have been suspended; that prisoners are now forced to spend up to 23 hours a day in their cells and are banned from seeing friends and family; that parole board hearings have been cancelled. Maybe all this is necessary and justifiable, but we have got to question it and we must stay on guard against Big Brother. How far we are willing to go to protect human rights is just as important a test of a nation’s character as what we will do to protect human life.

In other words, our “leaders” aren’t the only ones who should be under the microscope. How the rest of us react to the power they exercise says a great deal about us.

The Washington example brings another to mind, that of the ancient orator and statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero.

At the height of his power as Consul, having snuffed out a mortal threat to Roman liberty, Cicero was quick to return power to the people. When his one-year term was up, he honored the term limit requirement and retired. Like Cincinnatus of an earlier day, Cicero did the job and went home.

Cicero yearned for both liberty and normalcy. Nations are great to the extent they do as well. Some say America’s greatness during World War II showed itself in our awesome abilities to bomb the enemy to smithereens. I think, instead, we proved our greatness when we walked away when the task was finished. We didn’t annex Japan or Western Europe as, say, the Soviets effectively did to Eastern Europe.

When the pandemic is at last over, hindsight will help us fully understand and assess the measures employed. Surely, some of what frightened people readily embraced in the emergency will be deemed to have been proper. Other measures will be seen as ill-informed, hasty, or counterproductive. And perhaps the most telling benchmarks of leadership and character will come in that aftermath.

This much I know for sure: Liberty is so important to me that life without it is simply unthinkable. I will not sanction its permanent limitation for the sake of temporary expediency. I will judge the leadership and character of those in power by how quickly they get off our backs, out of our pockets, and out of our way when the crisis has passed. I will judge most harshly those who use the situation to enshrine the state as our master.

**4 Our
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Toward that end, I invite readers to think about these words of wisdom and warning:

- “The true danger is when liberty is nibbled away, for expedients, and by parts.” – Edmund Burke, 1777
- “There is danger from all men. The only maxim of a free government ought to be to trust no man living with power to endanger the public liberty.” – John Adams, 1772
- “If ye love wealth better than liberty, the tranquility of servitude better than the animating contest of freedom, go home from us in peace. We ask not your counsels or arms. Crouch down and lick the hands which feed you. May your chains set lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen.” – Samuel Adams, 1776
- “Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants; it is the creed of slaves.” – William Pitt, 1783.
- “It is the common fate of the indolent to see their rights become a prey to the active. The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance; which condition if he break, servitude is at once the consequence of his crime and the punishment of his guilt.” – John Philpot Curran, 1790
- “Those who would give up essential liberty, to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety.” – Benjamin Franklin, 1755 **B**

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SAMSUNG Galaxy S20 Series

Samsung's Galaxy S phones have always been one of the best and go to Android phones for premium segment customers in Nepal. The Galaxy S series have been offering all the latest features and also come in multiple screen sizes and options. The focus is now on the recently launched Galaxy S20 and S20+ which is considered a game changer with new offerings and interesting upgrades over its predecessors.

Design and Display

Samsung Galaxy S20 Series, both S20 and S20+, comes with a striking glass body protected by the latest Gorilla Glass 6 and aluminium frame. Both phones also have IP68 dust/water certification but Samsung has excluded the 3.5 mm headphone jack on the 'S' series.

As for the displays, while S20 comes with a 6.2-inches QHD+ Dynamic AMOLED panel with HDR10+ compliance, S20+ has a taller 6.7-inches "Infinity-O" QHD+ Dynamic AMOLED display. Refresh rate of 120Hz makes debut on both the phones, but you can turn on 120Hz only in FHD+ resolution because activating the superior refresh rate on the vibrant QHD+ resolution will dry down the battery in a mere couple of hours.

Camera

Samsung has also upgraded the cameras on S20 series compared to the S10 family. The Galaxy S20 has a vertically arranged triple rear camera setup with a 12MP main sensor, a 12MP ultra-wide lens, and a 64MP telephoto lens; both primary and telephoto lens supporting OIS. The S20+ version comes with an additional ToF 3D "Depth Vision" sensor camera for improved portrait shots alongside the identical S20 triple rear camera setup. Both



phones can deliver 3x optical zoom and 30x hybrid zoom, click stunning low-light photos and videos because of the bigger image sensor, and also have the same 10 megapixel circular punch-hole cutout front camera on top of the display.

One big software addition by Samsung on the S20 series is called Single Take mode. The user can shoot one 10 second video clip using this mode and the system automatically uses all the camera tools like AI best moment, ultra wide, live focus, AI filter, smart crop, video forward and backwards, fast forward and original video at once and generates a range of content. The user can then select options, and can save or share them. The Single Take mode is also available for the front camera and according to Samsung, the package of per take of Single Take mode is 55MB in total.

The S20 series is also one of the first smartphones to offer 8K video recording. The phones capture 8K super resolution (7680x4320px) videos at 24 frames per second (fps) which is 16 times higher than FHD and gives off a snappy 33MP image. Anti-rolling stabilizer, pro video mode and super slow motion/hyperlapse modes are

some of the video offerings of the S20 series. The super slow-mo feature shoots at 960fps in HD resolution. The 8K videos captured by S20 series phones can also be converted down to 4K or FHD without affecting the original resolution.

Performance and Memory

The S20 and S20+ are powered by the latest Exynos 990 chipset in the global variants which is also available in Nepal, while the Snapdragon 865-powered versions are available in the US and Canada only. The S20 version only supports the moderately slower sub-6GHz spectrum of 5G and not the faster mm Wave 5G connectivity whereas the S20+ supports both sub-6GHz and mm Wave of the 5G spectrum. Both phones run on One UI 2.0 based on Android 10 out of the box and have the ultrasonic in-display fingerprint sensor too.

A new generation of RAM – Samsung LPDDR5 RAM – makes its debut in the S20 series. Both Galaxy S20 and S20+ have 12GB RAM and 128GB of UFS 3.0 storage on the 5G variant, while the 8GB RAM 128GB Storage configuration can be found on the LTE models. The Galaxy S20+ 5G variant can go

as high as 512GB in terms of internal storage.

Battery

The Galaxy S20 has a standard 4000 mAh battery whereas S20+ comes with a bigger 4500 mAh battery. Both phones support 25W fast charging via a faster Type-C to Type-C connectivity called "USB Power Delivery 3.0". They also support 15W wireless and 9W reverse-wireless charging.

Other Interesting Features

Both S20 and S20+ supports 240Hz touch response making the phones incredible in terms of gaming hardware. The phones also have a new gaming function that allows users to keep up to five apps/games suspended in RAM ready to go at a moment's notice which cuts down or eliminates load times when resuming games and reduces holdup while playing games.

Samsung has also installed a feature called Music Share in its S20 series phones. Through this feature the user can basically do pass-through Bluetooth connections, meaning the user wouldn't have to disconnect his/her Bluetooth connection with the car to let another user connect with the car's Bluetooth, and the another user can connect to the car's Bluetooth directly through the user's Galaxy S20. The feature also works with smart speakers.

Pricing

The Samsung Galaxy S20, with 12GB RAM and 128 GB of storage, will cost Rs 1,07,499 and S20+ with 12GB of RAM and 128 GB of storage is priced at Rs 1,19,499. The price and availability of the 512 GB variant hasn't been revealed yet. Both phones come with one year breakage insurance. S20 is available in Cosmic Grey and Cloud Blue colour variants whereas S20+ is available in Cosmic Black, Cosmic Grey and Cloud Blue variants. **B**



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World Economic Forum awards Youth Leader Pradip Pariyar with Young Global Leaders 2020

The World Economic Forum has recognised Nepali youth leader Mr. Pradip Pariyar in its 2020 class of Young Global Leaders (YGL) for his contribution in empowering the youth and promoting social justice.

The Forum of Young Global Leaders was launched by the World Economic Forum's founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab in 2004 to help the world address increasingly complex and interrelated challenges.

The World Economic Forum has been recognising potential youth leaders across the globe with the YGL awards, investing in their leadership skills and innovative ideas to prepare them for meeting global challenges.

Pariyar is the only recipient of the YGL award from Nepal this year. In a statement issued on March 11, the Forum of Young Global Leaders said Pariyar was chosen for the YGL award 2020 for his potential in and contribution to youth empowerment, peace building and advocacy for social inclusion of the Dalits and marginalised communities.

Currently serving as the Executive Chairperson of Samata Foundation, a



leading independent think-tank with specialisation in the area of caste-based discrimination and marginalisation, Pariyar has spent more than 18 years in formulating national and international policies for youth, peace and social justice. Previously he has won the Asia 21 Young Leaders Award in 2018 from the New York-based Asia Society and the Youth Leadership Award in 2015 from the Ministry of Youth and Sports for his decade-long contribution to youth empowerment and leadership development. He was a Youth Fellow of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in 2011.

Pariyar was instrumental in bringing out Nepal's first youth-responsive budget in 2011, and played a key role in formulating National Youth Policy (2015)

and Youth Vision-2025. He also contributed to the first UN Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security from the perspective of social inclusion. In 2018, he presented a shadow report on Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) to the UN's Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Geneva. He has experience of working for youth and peace building in Somalia, Myanmar and Timor Leste and has trained more than 2,000 youth across the globe.

The Forum of Young Global Leaders is an independent non-profit foundation bringing together diverse, dynamic and globally representative leaders for a five-year, personalised leadership program.

With 1,300 members and alumni representing over

100 nationalities, YGLs head governments and Fortune 500 companies, are recipients of Nobel Prizes and Academy Awards, and serve as UN Goodwill Ambassadors. Each year thousands of candidates are publicly nominated. With the purpose of creating a truly representative body, candidates are evaluated by a selection committee, which selects between 100-150 new members each year. The Forum aims to create a world where young leaders take responsibility for a sustainable future. It cultivates a community of responsible leaders to build bridges across sectors, regions, ideologies and identities, and to achieve trust that transcends current divides.



Forbes 30 under 30 Asia 2020: Six Nepalis Make it to the list

Forbes announced today its fifth annual '30 Under 30 Asia' list, featuring 300 young entrepreneurs, leaders and changemakers across Asia, all under the age of 30, who are challenging conventional wisdom and rewriting the rules for the next generation. Six Nepalis to make it to the list are Nikita Acharya and Kiran

Timsina, Co-Founders of Urban Girl in the category of Retail and E-commerce; Rohit Tiwari, Co-Founder of Foodmario; Jesselina Rana and Shubhangi Rana, Cofounders of Pad2Go in the category of Social Entrepreneurship; and Pratima Sherpa, Golf Athlete in the category of Youngest.

Rana Wehbe, Forbes 30

Under 30 Asia Editor, said: "This year's Forbes 30 Under 30 Asia list-makers inspire optimism in what is promising to be a tough year ahead. They are a resilient and energetic bunch who are facing challenges head-on and actively working for a future that matches their aspirations."

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Himalaya Airlines inducts brand new A319 into the fleet



On the threshold of its fifth Anniversary, Himalaya Airlines added a brand new A319-115 to its fleet on March 2. Capt. Hao Di, Vice President – Operations, inducted the aircraft with the maiden flight from Tianjin Binhai International Airport in China to Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu. The new aircraft MSN 9020, with registration number 9N-AJK, landed at TIA at 22:20 hours in local time. With this new aircraft, Himalaya Airlines fleet will comprise of three Airbus A320-214 and one Airbus A319-115.

Acknowledging the inclusion of the newly arrived A319-115, Zhou Enyong, President of Himalaya Airlines, quoted, “This is a step forward in line with the company’s strategy to expand Himalaya Airlines network and operate new routes which are expected to commence during 2020. We promise safe and comfortable journey to all our valued customers, ensuring the highest level of safety with ultramodern aircraft and technologies. With this new arrival we

envisage to take Himalaya Airlines to greater heights, establishing it as a leading international airline in the region. Our fleet expansion plan has two more A319 aircraft coming by 2021.”

Vijay Shrestha, Vice President - Administration, remarked “The new arrival of A319 is a milestone in the expansion of the H9 fleet. It is a proud addition to the family, embarking on a major change that supports H9’s mission statement: to strengthen air connectivity for regional prosperity. Year 2020 will witness a remarkable progress in Himalaya’s activities such as operating new frequencies, additional services on the existing routes and increase in convenient flight connections. This will enhance flight service to more important destinations in Tibet as well as in China and will stimulate the commercial, industrial and tourist activities in the region. With its features and configuration, A319 is well suited for H9’s operational requirements and promises more sustainable and competitive future for H9.”

Provincial dialogue on mitigating regulatory constraints for the growth of small businesses



A recent study conducted by the UK-aid funded Purnima programme in collaboration with Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) on the business climate highlighted the policy and regulations that were impeding the growth of small businesses in Nepal. At the half-day provincial dialogue, the participants deliberated on creating an enabling environment for local businesses. The dialogue commenced with discussion on the existing tax regulations and provisions for the registration of local businesses. “Tax is a compulsory payment levied by the government on its citizens. Fees on the other hand, are voluntary payments made by the public for the services rendered by

the government. While determining the tax rates, the government should keep in mind both the ability of the tax payers as well as its capacity to deliver services respectively,” shared Pawan Lohani, Local Government Finance Expert.

Over 60 participants including grass-root entrepreneurs from Bagmati and Gandaki Province were present. “Unclear jurisdictions at different levels of newly structured government further resulted in delays during registration and tax payment. These constraints not only add to the cost, but also were identified as major reasons behind informal payments including bribery, reference cost and so on,” highlighted one of the participating entrepreneurs.

Vishal Group to contribute Rs 1 Crore to aid in Corona Virus response



As the threat of COVID-19 pandemic continues in Nepal, on March 26 Vishal Group announced that the

VG Foundation, CSR unit of the group, will contribute up to Rs 1 Crore to support the government’s response to the pandemic and to aid the public health relief efforts. VG Foundation is now working with international suppliers to source N95 masks, sanitisers, Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), infrared thermometers and other medical supplies and to supply to various medical establishments in Nepal.

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Utopia launches a CITYLAB as a new platform for urban innovation to help shape the future of Kathmandu

On March 18, Utopia announced the launch of CITYLAB as the home for urban innovation in Kathmandu. Utopia believes that the urban innovation lab will bring together the next generation of urban entrepreneurs who help define the future of the city. CITYLAB is part of a growing global network of labs Utopia is creating for emerging cities across Asia, Africa, and Latin America to build the urban innovation ecosystem for emerging cities and their slums. The CITYLAB work across three fronts. The CITYLAB builds and backs urban startups that bring solutions to make the city better for the many, not just the few which consist of a space, team, and 18-month program. Second, it is an innovation platform to bring together entrepreneurs and corporations to prototype new solutions for dense emerging

urban markets in emerging cities. Lastly, the CITYLAB work with city governments to support entrepreneurship's role in shaping the positive future of the city and to help the city find and implement promising innovative urban solutions from around the world.

Corporate partners, investors, and city government can join CITYLAB to help catalyse the emerging Kathmandu urban innovation ecosystem. Its head office in San Francisco offers start-ups and partners a portal into cutting edge tech and extensive networks from this Silicon Valley foothold. Nepal Communitere is an ecosystem partner who strengthens the venture building process with their experience in intensive start-up incubation.

Tesla Diagnostic Clinic launches in Kathmandu

Tesla Diagnostic Clinic, a newly established diagnostic clinic located in Baluwatar Kathmandu, officially launched all its diagnostic services on March 18. It is offering 25%



discount on all services along with 50% discount on health packages. The clinic was founded in 2019 by a group of experienced healthcare professionals whose aim was to establish an innovative diagnostic, research and wellness clinic providing the highest quality medical services with the latest technology at an affordable rate.

The clinic houses modern facilities and is equipped with state-of-the-art medical equipment. The Clinic offers full radiology services like 3 Tesla

MRI, 64-Slice CT SCAN, digital X-ray, digital mammography, Dental OPG-CBCT, Ultrasound and Colour Doppler. The Pathology Lab fulfils all basic pathology needs with a focus on wellness. Other diagnostics like EchoCardiography, ABP, Holter, ECG, PFT, Urea Breath Test and BMD are also available. The outpatient clinic focuses on primary care and also handles numerous specialties, providing a high standard of medical care.

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

We are at a time when there is a lot of uncertainty and fear around us regarding the global health pandemic COVID 19. While the situation in Nepal - till the time I write this article - is not as alarming, it would be foolish to remain unprepared. I am not an expert on the virus but am writing this article strictly from the perspective of a fitness expert and a wellness coach.

My teacher once told me that when it comes to transferable diseases, you are only as strong as your body's ability to protect itself. Rather than feed the fear and worry incessantly, convert the time to prepare yourself better – physically, emotionally and mentally. While it is extremely important to follow the health protocols laid out by the diseases control mechanisms worldwide, it is equally important to prepare yourself on the inside to lower the stress and do everything to build your immunity. Here are some things I hope will help you:

If you are uncertain about being outdoors – even if it is to the nearby grocery store - especially at time of lockdown, don't go. The stress of to go or not to go will most certainly weaken your immune system if nothing.



Maintain high levels of hygiene. Wash your hands, wipe down surfaces, ensure there is sufficient air ventilation, avoid being in groups especially if you have a compromised health condition generally, get enough sunlight, keep things generally clean around yourself.

Exercise is non-negotiable to your wellbeing. Ensure that you are walking, running, active and get at least 30 minutes of workout at home. While working out, please be careful at this time not to overdo it because when you build the intensity, your immunity lowers for awhile before it recovers.

Focus on your nutrition. Fresh vegetables and fruits are important and should be the mainstay of your food. Avoid meat, frozen and packed foods. Enjoy regular meals and eat in a quiet environment with appreciation that the food you are consuming is nourishing you.

Stay hydrated. Water is a natural immune booster. It is especially crucial that your body gets enough water through the day. Many of us have a tendency to neglect consuming sufficient water or to meet the target, we have it at one go.

Be mindful of what you consume especially from the news and social media. This is especially important. There is so much information out there and not all of it is helpful. Some people are taking social media updates every few minutes and suffer from undue anxiety and paranoia.

Meditate. A few minutes of quiet time and meditation as soon as you awaken and before you go to sleep is very beneficial for your overall wellbeing. During the span of the day, should you feel overwhelmed or anxious – especially because most conversations today focus on the disease or the impact of it

in multiple ways – take a few minute to sit by yourself and breathe deeply to calm your mind.

Sleep well. Get regular hours of sleep. You should wake up feeling rested. Sleep is nature's best healer. Do not undermine the importance of a good night's sleep on your immunity.

Avoid the things that dent your immunity such as high intake of alcohol, tobacco or caffeine.

Emotional wellbeing. It's very important that you feel supported. Spend time with your loved ones or your pet. If you are working from home already or have chosen to maintain social distancing, that is a choice you have made and you should not feel ridiculed or lesser for doing what feels right for you even if others fail to understand it. **B**



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Sadhguru. Named one of 50 most influential people, Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, a 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.



Make your role so worthy in life that people applaud even after the curtains fall: They say this was Colonel MN Rai's WhatsApp status a few weeks ago. This little statement shows the depth of his insight into life. Only a person who is willing to die can live life totally. What you call as “life” is just a brief happening. There is no guarantee that you will not die tomorrow. An intelligent being will live with the awareness that it could happen even today. Once you are constantly aware of this, you will come alive.

It does not take enormous intelligence and research, nor do you need education to find out whether you will die or not. It is inbuilt in every human being the moment one is born. At least by the time you are four or five you know you can die. So, it is not that people are not aware, they are trying to close their eyes to it. It is good to look at it with openness. This is something that needs to be brought into a person's life early enough, not after death has happened. Because this is not something that you handle at that moment, all of a sudden. When someone has just lost a very dear one, if you now try to

preach, you will hurt them even more.

On a certain day, a woman who was the mother of three young boys lost her husband and was grief stricken. Naturally, after this she clung on to the three children as her life. But the eldest boy also died after a year, and soon after, the second one also passed away. Now she clung onto her only child for dear life, but this boy also died soon after. Unable to bear this, she took the little boy's body and went to Gautama the Buddha. She said, “You and all your spirituality. Whatever you are talking doesn't mean anything unless you bring this boy to life. My husband died, I somehow bore that. My first boy died and then the second one too, I still held on. Now the last one is also gone. If you are real, prove it now by bringing this boy to life.”

Gautama looked at the woman and knew that in this state of inflamed emotion, whatever he could say or do would not get across. So he said, “I will bring your boy back to life. Go and get me a few

sesame seeds from a house that has never known death.” Carrying the boy's body, the woman went from house to house, looking for one that had never known death. After going through the entire town, she realised there wasn't a single home like this. Then she stopped, did what she had to do with the body, came back and sat in front of Gautama. She remained with him right through her life.

Death is not a surprise. You must remind yourself and introduce this fact into your children's lives very early. It is not necessary that it needs to happen in your family; it is happening to somebody or the other every day. Just remind your children, “Death is not a calamity; it is a natural process of life.” You can talk to them about your own death; it is very good for them to know that their parents will die someday. Then, instead of dying after 25 years, if you die tomorrow, they will still be able to handle their lives. Even if you disappear tomorrow morning, they must be able to live a sensible and balanced life. If you do not

acquaint them with death, they will not be able to do it.

This does not mean that you will not miss your departed loved ones, or that you will be devoid of normal human emotions. Of course, you will feel the loss, but it need not destroy you. Everything that occurs in your life can enrich you, if only you handle it with a certain sense of awareness. When you have paid such a huge price of losing someone dear to you, should you not benefit from it? It is an enormous possibility for you to mature and grow beyond your limitations. You must benefit from it. If you are aware, you will benefit from it immensely.

Ranked amongst the 50 most influential people in India, Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, visionary and a New York Times bestselling author. Sadhguru has been conferred the Padma Vibhushan by the Government of India in 2017, the highest annual civilian award, accorded for exceptional and distinguished service. **B**



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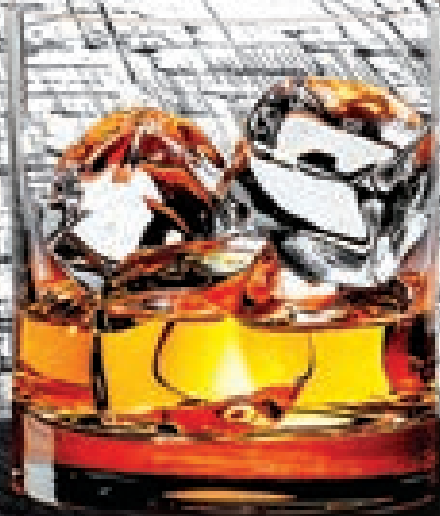


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