Wasim Zaman, 65

News that among the nine people brutally slain by the Taliban at the Serena Hotel in Kabul on 20 March was Wasim Zaman came as a shock to the many friends the Bangladeshi population expert had made in Nepal.

Zaman, 65, was the Central and South Asia head of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) based in Kathmandu from 1999-2004 and was popular among officials and activists in the region, and his large Nepali and expat social circle in Kathmandu. After retiring from the UN, Zaman had joined the Kuala Lumpur-based International Council on Management of Population Programmes, and was on mission in Kabul to help the UNFPA Afghanistan Country Office with the agenda for the International Conference on Population and Development later this year in New York. Although he was a US citizen his death has got scant mention in the American media.

Thursday's attack came two weeks before Afghanistan's presidential election, and four of the dead were foreigners. An Afghan journalist with Agence France Presse, Sardar Ahmad, his wife and two small children were among the others who were killed execution style by the assassins.

The Serena Hotel has several layers of security, but the clean-shaven gunmen smuggled tiny pistols in their socks and waited for the restaurant to fill up for a Afghan new year dinner before shooting people as they sat their tables.

Another Bangladeshi person was also among those killed. "My father loved Nepal," his daughter Farihah Zaman said, "he became enamored of the mountains, the generosity and kindness of the Nepali people and my parents found a calm while living in Kathmandu, in their beautiful garden and going for long daily walks. One of the things he most looked forward to was going back to Nepal."

Wasim Zaman was planning to retire at the end of this year and devote more time to his family, especially his two-year-old granddaughter. His three daughters live in the US, while his wife Shamim is in Kuala Lumpur.

Zaman was in Kathmandu last year for a regional South Asian consultation to prepare for the UN's Special General Assembly on Population and Development later in 2014. In an interview while in Kathmandu Wasim expressed worries that funding for population activities in South Asia was drying up.

Before joining the UN, Zaman was a journalist with *Dhaka Television* and a correspondent for the *Bangladesh Observer*.

At a memorial in Kabul this week, one of his colleagues said: "Wasim showed exceptional kindness, generosity, was warm and caring nature towards each and every person...he had a deep interest in politics and a constructive spirit to take on tough issues and seek solutions. He had an amazing network well beyond what his work required with artists, historians, writers, politicians, world leaders and activists." ◱

Kunda Dixit

Nepal's recent history on pdf

The complete archive of 700 issues of *Nepali Times* on the Digital Himalaya website is a one-stop reference tool

MARK TURIN

The Digital Himalaya Project is a collection, storage and dissemination portal for scholarly content and research findings about the Himalayan region and was established in December 2000 in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge.

While the project began as a strategy for collecting and protecting the products of colonial-era ethnographic collections on the Himalaya for posterity and for access by heritage communities Digital Himalaya has now become a collaborative digital publishing environment, bringing a new collection online every month.

The website has grown from being a static homepage with occasional updates to a dynamic content delivery platform for over 40GB of archival census data, maps, films, audio recordings, photographs, journals and scanned books. We have also witnessed dramatic changes in the profile of visitors to our site: from (overwhelmingly) members of European and American universities in the early years, to a well networked, global and digitally literate user community, in particular from South and Inner Asia.

Almost all of our digitisation and scanning is now conducted in Nepal and our funding no longer comes from national funding councils in the UK and USA, but through Web referrals and from individual or institutional donations around the world.

There appear to be two reasons for the high number of web visitors that we have from South Asia. First, many users in South Asia have leapfrogged in terms of their access to and the affordability of new technology, moving from dialup to broadband services in just a few years. A generation of 'born digital' young Indians, Nepalis, Bhutanese and Tibetans are now downloading and using our content.

Second, a consequence of the poor state of many university and public libraries in parts of Asia is that students and teachers often have limited access to print collections and catalogues—even of material that was originally published in their own country. Weather conditions detrimental to collections and under-resourced libraries combine to make free, online access as provided by Digital Himalaya particularly attractive to scholars based in the Himalayan region.

Digital Himalaya is now the online host (or co-host) for 40 journals, magazines and publications of Himalayan studies. Some publications are regular, others are occasional and poorly distributed, while a number are defunct or orphaned publications with a large collection of back issues.

We are particularly proud of our partnership with *Nepali Times* as Digital Himalaya boasts a complete back archive of each and every issue of this important English weekly since July 2000—the year that both our archive and the paper were established. The *Nepali Times* collection of 700 issues is 2.5 GB in size, updated every Saturday morning, and housed on secure servers at the University of Cambridge. It is regularly accessed by an average of 300 visitors a day and has more users in Nepal than in all of Europe combined.

It's a pleasant surprise to discover that what started as an academic research project 14 years ago, has become a vast online portal for hosting and disseminating knowledge about the Himalayan region to a global and fast-growing user base. ◱

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