Plain speaking

In a televised address to the nation on Tuesday, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal urged the Madhesi people to express their grievances through the ballot box. Umesh Sah Kanu (pictured above) was watching the speech live in his Birganj sweet shop, and said it was “just sweet talk.”

Kanu says he is not sure if he will vote in local elections on 16 May if Madhesi parties boycott it. However, he does not support another agitation. The last one last year ruined his business.

Back in Kathmandu, talks between the government and the Madhesi Front were deadlocked again on Wednesday. Tarai-centric parties renewed threats to disrupt elections in the plains if the constitution is not amended. Birganj professor Lal Bahadur Dahal says: “The common people here are not that concerned about the amendment. But they will not vote if there is fear of violence.”

In Janakpur, Prof Surendra Labh says it was never about the amendment or constitution. “Madhesi feel they are discriminated by the state, and the government made it worse by not including enough Madhesi in recent appointments of judges and ambassadors.”

Labh feels Madhesi parties need a face-saver to agree to elections: “If the statute is amended, they can go triumphantly to their constituencies, but whether that will address problems plaguing the plains is another issue.”

So far, the Madhesi parties are staying firm even though there is no way the proposed amendment will get a two-thirds vote in Parliament because the UML, RPP and MFP (D) are all against it for different reasons.

RPP Chair Kamal Thapa told PM Dahal his party will not support the amendment. Dahal then asked Madhesi leaders to put the amendment bill on hold and vote on it after local elections in May. Madhesi leaders refused.

“The amendment is just an excuse to avoid elections,” says UML Chief Whip Bhumishwar Basnet. “Madhesi parties will find another excuse if the Constitution is amended.” There should be elections with or without them.”

Former PM Baburam Bhattarai’s Naya Shakti party is also opposed to elections, and wants an all-party government. He is now competing for the same constituency with the Salja Party launched by journalist Rabindra Mishra this week.

Surendra Labh in Janakpur sums it up: “Elections can take place without the Madhesi parties. That may end the constitutional transition, but it will prolong the political transition.”

Om Astha Rai and Ijrial Sab in Birganj

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GUEST EDITORIAL
SANGITA THEBE LIMBU

Leave no one behind

The rise of right-wing populism and the backlash against women’s rights and minorities has provided renewed political impetus to the global feminist movement. Here in Nepal, as we mark International Women’s Day amidst patriarchal nationalism and entrenched social inequalities, two challenges remain: making the feminist movement inclusive, and achieving economic empowerment for women. Both are fundamental prerequisites for gender equality.

Since the 1995 adoption of the landmark Beijing Platform for Action there has been significant progress in female literacy, improved educational attainment, reduction in maternal mortality, rising female labour force participation and more women assuming leadership positions. In addition, gender-based violence, previously dismissed as a private affair, is now recognised under the legal framework including right to sexual and reproductive health.

However, the achievements are unevenly distributed with the outcomes largely dependent upon many other factors such as socio-economic status, caste, ethnicity, geographic location, disability, sexuality, and marital status. The 2015 UN Women report highlights that ethnic and indigenous women are less likely than non-indigenous women to have access to contraception, antenatal care and skilled births attendance.

Likewise, a 2012 ILO report shows that in comparison to non-indigenous women, indigenous women in Nepal are often at a disadvantage in employment and working conditions. This is partly due to language barriers, whereby indigenous women are far less likely than indigenous men to speak the national language. This hinders educational attainment and socio-economic opportunities, and is a manifestation of historical marginalisation of various ethnic communities by the state.

Feminists are about challenging unequal gender relations but that cannot be done without addressing wider socio-economic inequalities. Hence, going beyond the homogenisation of ‘women’, it is crucial to understand the lived experiences of women from different communities to make the feminist movement inclusive, relevant and substantial. Otherwise, any progress made will perpetuate discrimination and further reinforce unequal power relations between men and women, as well as among women.

But the other question is how do we translate values of diversity, inclusion, progressive laws and policies into tangible and transformative outcomes? This is where addressing gender disparities in the labour market becomes crucial. Gender equality cannot be achieved without women’s economic empowerment, which is based on the notion of women having not only skills and resources to advance economically but also decision-making power and control over their economic resources.

According to the Annual Household Survey 75% of Nepali women are in the labour force but they hold just 0.2% of public sector jobs whereas around 60% of employed women work in agriculture. Gendered hierarchies within the informal economy often result in men dominating more remunerative jobs, while women are over-represented in the least secure and low-paid jobs at the bottom of home-based and family workers.

The UN Women report shows that women who do the majority of unpaid care work are denied equal pay for work of equal value, and are less likely to be able to receive a pension. The gender pay gap in Nepal is wide with women earning 48.5% less than men.

Soctal and occupational segregation whereby women are largely concentrated in low-paid, precarious and informal jobs also contribute to widening the gender pay gap. Out of 53 million domestic workers worldwide, 83% are women. Many rural women in Nepal migrate to cities or the Gulf states for domestic work where they are often deprived of labour rights and social protection, and are vulnerable to abuse from employers and recruitment agencies.

The labour market is not a neutral arena but reflects existing social norms and power structures. Absorbing women into the labour market by reinforcing traditional gender roles is not empowering. The UN Highlevel Panel report advocates a multi-pronged approach by tackling adverse norms, reforming discriminatory laws, reducing and reallocating unpaid care work, addressing gender gaps in digital, financial and property assets to changing business and public sector culture and practices, and strengthening visibility, a collective voice and representation.

Creating an inclusive feminist movement to address the pressing questions around secure livelihoods, decent jobs and reorganising of the economy that works well for both women and men remains a challenge, and offers opportunities.

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Sangita Thebe Limbu

Director, Federal Alliance of Social Development

ONLINE VIDEOS

THE GOLDEN KING

Go to Nepal Times Online to watch the reinstatement this week of Putaburungiffer of the title of Malla in November at the Kathmandu Durbar Square.

TUNE IN

nepaltimes.com

THE SPEED OF SOUND

Listen to an online podcast on podcasting in Nepal, and how women journalists are breaking the sound barrier in the digital medium. Podcaster Geetika Karki, Shanthi Rai and Rina Girl talk about the challenges of online audio and opportunities.

WHAT’S TRENDING

Of local, for local, buy local

Of local, for local, buy local

Read about Green Granola, a new online business that includes the cultivation of local and fair-trade products by the local farmers of Bathak. Watch the video to learn more.

Most viewed on Facebook

(2,060 people watched)

Most popular on Twitter (34 retweets, 51 likes)

Studying cat scat

Snow leopards are struggling against extinction but the good news is they are doing well. I learn more about how studies of snow leopard droppings gives scientists clues on how to save them.

The artist of Madhesi muse,

Who is the Madhesi sabaln

Who represents the voice of the Madhesi masses, given the complexity of the cultural mosaic? Who is the leader of the movement in challenging the new Constitution?

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LIFE-SAVING LOVE

Nepal Times Marks Women’s Day with a month of the remarkable love story of a man who dedicated one of his kidneys to his sick wife. The video was very popular online and generated 8,350,000 views, 5,188 shares and 129 comments on Facebook. If you missed it, watch the video again in the苛 talk the emotional story of selfless love.

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DIVERSE MADHESI

Kanak Mani Dixit’s article compares geopolitics ("Who is the Madhesi sabaln?", ‘847), and also it means that Madhesians are no longer a homogenous community, given the differences between them, between ethnicities, religion, race, and class, and also the differences between indigenous inhabitants and Indian immigrants.

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AMBASSADORIAL POLITICS

If the proposed ambassadors are crooks and corrupt, then the leaders who backed them must be as well (‘Let’s have more anti-corruption’, the Asia, ‘847). We are the ones who choose politicians. So we have to blame no one but ourselves. Gyurme Dondup

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KEEP IT LOCAL

Green Growth is a really good initiative, keep it local and also import from ‘local for local’, Samrit Barnett, ‘847.

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CORRECTION

Due to a reporting error in the story on Green Growth (‘Of local, for local, buy local’, ‘847), Nischal Pokharel was misidentified.

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Sangita Thebe Limbu

Director, Federal Alliance of Social Development

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LADIES FIRST SINCE THE FIRST DAY

HAPPY WOMEN’S DAY
Cloud with a dark lining

Nepalis have 24-hour electricity, but it has doubled our carbon footprint because of the import of thermal power

OM ASTHA RAJ

At the end of his turbulent three-year tenure as India’s ambassador to Nepal Ranjit Rae told editors at a farewell reception last week that New Delhi had not been given due recognition for ending load-shedding. Rae reportedly said that the new Managing Director of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) Nabin Ghising was getting all the credit. When one of the editors tweeted this, the outgoing Indian envoy was slammed on social media for implying that it was charity. “Nepal paying for the power,” read one tweet.

However, it appears to be true that India has gone out of its way to offer help with transmission lines that had been delayed for years, so the power could be imported. One NEA source told Nepal Times that India has been unusually accommodating after Pushpa Kamal Dahal became Prime Minister in August last year. “Ending load shedding would not be possible in the dry season unless the transmission lines had been completed to import power,” he said, adding that although Ghising deserved credit for cutting off dedicated feeders to industries and controlling leakage it would not have been sufficient to end load-shedding in the dry season.

Ghising would have had to ramp up power rationing if the 400 KV Dhalbhair-Muzaffarpur transmission line had not been completed in order to import power from India to meet this dry season’s shortfall. NEA was therefore able to buy 400 MW from India, up from 250 MW last year. Once two more 132 KV cross-border lines (Kumaha-Katariya and Raxaul-Purnnapur) are completed late this year, Nepal can import even more power from India if needed.

Power imports from India are temporary to tide over the current supply deficit, and the same transmission lines can in future be used to export Nepal’s surplus power to India. But for that Nepal would have to build several high dams to store monsoon water to generate sufficient electricity. Power from India for electricity is a bad idea because besides being dependent on petroleum, Nepal is now also relying on power imports from India.

Funding farmers

NIC Asia Bank has raised loans for

deprived communities in Mtarika, Kakila.

With this, the bank aims to provide easy access to banking services to farmers and entrepreneurs in rural areas.

Win win

Padpua Paints unveiled names of the winners of the “Paints for a Win” campaign this week. For the first winner, the company has announced a 250cc Royal Enfield blue, while the other five winners are to be presented with trophies, fridge, washing machine and a television.

Got your back

On the occasion of International Wheelchair Day, Standard Chartered Bank Nepal handed over 20 wheelchairs and 70 sets of crutches to Nepal Disabled Association. The support

Carbon footprint

Till five months ago electricity supply from the mains may have been rationed, but at least we didn’t need cold water from hydropower. Nepal now has 24-hour electricity, but half of that is from thermal power plants in India that burn dirty coal. Every time you switch on the lights, remember: Nepal’s carbon footprint has doubled.

“We know it is dirty thermal electricity, but we badly need it,” interweave we have to bring back load-shedding,” Himendra Dev Shrestha of NEA’s System Planning Division told Nepal Times.

Nepal’s annual per capita emission of carbon is 6.13 tons (the United States is 17 tons) but it is now going up significantly. Nepal’s moral high ground in climate negotiations is going to be much more muted.

Climate analyst Marcell Dhalai says, “India has a high carbon emissions because it is burning fossil fuels to manufacture products for the global market. India might use the same argument and claim that it is burning coal to supply electricity to Nepal.”

Shahal says it is unfortunate that Nepal is importing dirty electricity from India when the world is moving to renewables. He adds “load-shedding was an opportunity for Nepal to switch to clean energy, but we wasted the chance and chose the easy way out by importing dirty and expensive energy.”

SULUX CENTRE
Wade, New Zealand, Otago, New Zealand, New Zealand

RAYMOND WEIL
GENEVE

PRAJHU BANK
BIZ BRIEFS

was given with cards collected from the Staff Family Food Fun & Fun that the company organized last year.

New models

Huawei recently launched its new flagship product, Huawei P9 and P9 Plus in MWC 2017 Barcelona. With an upgraded design and equipped with Leica as its front camera, the two models will be launched in Nepal soon.

In toilets we trust

Juntaii Kuki Kathmandu handed over five toilets designed by Slovak technology to Padpua Area Development Trust. In the five that were given, two toilets are for women and one for disabled.

+ prajhu bank
ENJOY A UNIQUE BLEND OF MALTS
the cage and rooks were perilously close to the wing tips as our Pilatus Porter aircraft spiralled downwards towards the tiny landing strip clinging to the remote Himalayan hillside. I could see

SO FAR SO GOOD
Lisa Chongyal

our shadow on the side of the valley, insignificant in the vast towering landscape. The single propeller blared in front of us as we swerved and dived, then shuddered to an impressive stop on the grass strip.

I knew better than to speak to the sniveling and short-tempered pilot by my side, dressed in short-sleeved white shirt uniform with epaulettes and fashionably flared pale blue trousers that matched the tail of the UNDP plane. Captain Hardy Fuerer (with the aeronautical chart of Nepal and in cockpit of a Pilatus Porter of the United Nations, abode had already made it clear I was privileged to join him on this run to drop supplies for a UN relief project to boost livelihoods in distant Jumla in northwestern Nepal. He was right. It was a rare opportunity to witness this seldom visited and remarkable corner of the country, and the only time I ever flew with him.

Given the tortuous terrain, air transport was crucial to Nepal’s early development and tourism. Horses or mules and even elephants were options in some parts of the country, but walking was the norm. Only in 1956 did the Tribhuvan Rajpur link Kathmandu with the outside world. The few vehicles in Kathmandu Valley before that were carried in an epic effort by porters along the historic trade route over the Chaurikhurt Pass to Thakot. The rugged topography hindered the road network, resulting in anomalies such as Pokhara becoming accessible by air six years before it could be reached by road.

The Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation was founded in 1958 (interestingly, about the same time as Singapore Airlines) but it was not until the mid-1960s that regular flights linked outlying parts of the country with the capital. The Twin Otters from Canada and Swiss Pilatus Porters were the aircraft of choice, and Hardy flew both. Nepal still presents some of the world’s most challenging conditions. “Never fly into clouds in the Himalayas, some of them have rocks in them,” he said.

Nepal’s most notable aviation pioneers were two long-term resident Swiss captains, the UN’s Hardy Fuerer and KNA’s amiable and more rotund Emil Wick. The first Pilatus Porter in Nepal was nicknamed “Yeti” and flown by Emil. He set the world record for the highest ever landing by a fixed-wing aircraft at 5,700m, ferrying mountain-towing supplies from Pokhara to the Dhaulagiri massif for a 1960 expedition. The record still stands, and the aircraft is still there, marooned on a glacier having crashed while trying to take off in high winds on Emil’s 17th shuttle flight.

Hardy and Emil both trained the first Nepali pilots, who Hardy helped develop some 40 STOL airfields over the 20 years that he flew to Nepal from the mid-1960s. He was my neighbour in Sanej, drove a stylish concave-crowned Mercedes sports car, and despite his troubled soul and irascible nature I adored him. He used to say, in a strong Swiss German accent, that he preferred flying cargo because it “didn’t ask bloody stupid questions.”

Hardy did not return my passion, but tolerated me around his blazing central fireplace, usually with a drink and cigarette in hand, and classical music blasting. I worried he was too skinny — he weighed 50 kg — and one evening I hugged him too hard, breaking one of his ribs. Hardy’s love was reserved for music, opera, and art. He selected flying over a career as a tenor, and of course for Nepal and his beloved mountains. He told me stories of amased, Nepali villagers in remote regions leaving huts under the nose of the aircraft in case it got hungry and, carefully inspecting the wings for feathers.

Both pilots were proud of their Swiss aircraft and enjoyed demonstrating its limits. When told by the control tower that the wind was too strong, Hardy once landed his Pilatus sideways across the runway at Kathmandu airport. Emil landed on Tunelkik, just to prove it was possible. After the tragic crash that killed Louise Hillary, Sir Edmund’s first wife, Emil showed it was possible to take off and land even with jammed wing flaps. It was Emil who flew me back from the Meghjali airstrip after the Twin Otter I was in had landed badly” in 1978, almost killing us as well. But that is another story. £
Women journalists break the sound barrier by streaming directly to audiences through the Internet

SAHINA SHRRESTHA

Last week, a Nepal Airlines flight from Kathmandu to Dubai diverted to Delhi because a passenger fell ill. Capt. Vijay Lama’s voice came on the Net immediately to explain what was happening, and the steps a passenger with medical condition should take when flying.

Capt. Lama wasn’t calling Air Traffic Control. He wasn’t making an announcement to passengers from the cockpit. His first-hand account was transmitted through an independent Nepali podcast channel called Sabscast on which 16,000 users streamed the pilot’s message.

“Audiocast is the fastest medium to disseminate information,” says Sabreena Karhi, former RJ and founder of Sabscast, who sees a vibrant future for the channel with the spread of smartphones and mobile Internet.

Unlike radio, podcasts are transmitted digitally via the Internet and listeners can either stream it online or download it to their mobiles and laptops. With ease of listening on the go, curated content and opportunities to monetise, the rich medium is gaining a loyal listenership in Nepal.

“Unlike radio where if you miss something, it’s gone, podcast allows you to listen over and over again whenever and wherever you want,” adds Karhi, who quit her job at Kantipur FM to strike off on her own.

Sabscast has programs ranging from storytelling, entertainment to news and politics. One of the most popular episodes was a chat with Kauram Shrestha, the vegetable girl whose photograph went viral on the Internet last year to score 40,000 streams on Sabscast.

Karhi was initially worried whether she would get appointments and interviews as a freelancer. But after her popular podcast of a chat with former King Gyanendra (mentioned above, right) there was no looking back. In less than a year, Sabscast has regular listeners in Nepal, the US and the Gulf.

She has sponsored for her show ‘Yo maya bhanye chye kha kasto kasto’ and advertising has started flooding in. Karhi says she did not get into podcasting to earn money, and was only following her passion and experimenting with a new medium.

The beauty of podcasting is that you don’t require fancy equipment, just a basic recording device and knowledge of audio editing,” Karhi explains. Sambhali Rai and Itisha Giri (above, left) are also podcast hosts of ‘Roja Raja’ which has a light-hearted talk on serious issues of gender. In a studio in Jhaukhabar, Rai sets up her laptop and connects via Skype to her co-host Giri in Spain to record their episodes.

Nine months since the launch ‘Roja Raja’ has been gaining popularity, and their first episode ‘Bhada and Where’ has been streamed more than 8,000 times on the channel’s SoundCloud account. “Podcast is a very liberating medium, there are no other distractions. Also not being affiliated to any organisation, we have complete control over our content and we can change our format and style depending on what the pressing issue is, allowing us to use our individuality to shape and spark a conversation that we think is important,” says Giri.

The pair have podcast about how media represents women, and trivialises issues of gender-based violence. All this is done in colloquial bilingual Nepali-English that is popular with young listeners.

“We went into it without any expectations but the response has been huge. We don’t just get instantaneous feedback, but listeners suggest issues they think we should cover,” says Rai. Karhi, Rai and Giri all agree that their main challenge is technical know-how of listeners, or the lack of it. Says Rai, “We still have to explain what podcast is and how people can listen to it. But with time I am sure the medium will grow given the love Nepalis have for audio.”

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Women do not need to be empowered, they are already strong, but what helps is support from the men in
the family. *Nepali Times* features three men who have stood by their women, encouraged them through
good times and bad, and given them the freedom to fly.

**Durga Subedi**

At 70, Durga Subedi is well known as Nepal's most famous & most famous figure of the country’s first female Chief Justice, Sushila Karki.

SCRUPULOUSLY honest and fierce in a female, Subedi has been a lifelong warrior for democracy. His wife, answering questions from MPs during her confirmation hearing for the post of Chief Justice last year, said that if she had done anything wrong in her career, he would have divested her on the spot.

On 10 June 1973, when he was just 21, Subedi and other Nepali Congress activists commandeered a Twin Otter of Royal Nepal Airlines shortly after it took off from Biratnagar, forcing it to land in Darjeeling in India and made off with Rs 3 million in Indian currency (worth about 100 times that amount today) to fund the NC pro-democracy movement in exile.

After that, Subedi retreated into obscurity, preferring the life of a reclusive husband, taking care of his family and the household, bringing up a son who is now an engineering student.

"She didn't need my identity to get to the position where she is now and I don't need hers," Subedi says, "but we respect each other's points of view as we believe in living a simple life with integrity and follow our conscience."

Subedi has no income and lives like a hermit in a sparsely furnished home. He met Sushila Karki when she was a student in a school where he was teaching. Later, Karki also joined the pro-democracy movement and divorced him when he was jailed. She became a lawyer and they married after the restoration of democracy in 1990.

"As they say love is eternal, I still wonder why Sushila married me when I was nobody and had nothing," he said, recalling how Sushila herself brought the vermillion and necklace for their marriage ceremony.

Subedi gave Karki complete freedom in a society where the status of women is not high. Karki has said in an interview: "I was very impressed by his devotion and honesty. If I had married someone else I would never be where I am today."

Subedi was born in Shimulpati in a family of subsistence farmers. The needs of socialism were planned in his mind since boyhood when he was struck by the gap between the rich and poor. After his mother died, Subedi moved to Biratnagar and worked to pay his way up through school.

He was attracted by the social democratic ideology of the NC. After B.P. Koirala was jailed following King Mahendra’s 1960 coup against his government, it was when B.P. was living in exile in India that Subedi joined the team that hijacked the plane to fleece the king’s democracy struggle. He was arrested and spent two years in jail in India.

Rinita Dahal
Riyaz Shrestha

Riyaz Shrestha is a well-known salsa instructor and owner of Coffee and Cupcakes. But he didn’t think being recognised as the husband of former Miss Nepal Malvika Subba.

Shrestha is unconventional, positive and humble, and admits his marriage would not have worked if he had held his wife back from her career, especially after their first baby was born 10 months ago. He has happily stayed home or cared for their child while Subba continues where she left off her media work.

“I just felt the responsibility to take care of our baby but I am not the only man who does it. Women have to sacrifice more than men after marriage and delivery. I just did what I could,” says the married Shrestha.

They first met in the United States in 2010 when he was at university. They fell in love and tied the inter-ethnic knot two years later. He is a Khasi, and Subba is herself of an inter-ethnic marriage between a Brahmin and Limbu.

She was already a celebrity even before they met, and after our marriage I just supported her so she could get on with her career,” adds Shrestha softly as he puts his baby to sleep.

Shrestha is perfectly happy to be attending to household chores, as he says he doesn’t dream big and is content with his job. He has always been inspired by his wife’s commitment and passion to her career, and manes at how hard the work.

He had heard of famous women who abandoned their careers after marriage in Nepal’s male-dominated society. But he was determined that their marriage was not going to end up doing that. In fact, Shrestha boasts that his wife earns more than him.

Nepali society is changing, but tradition and culture are stronger than education and awareness, and are still barriers to women’s freedom and for gender equality, Shrestha says. “She is more capable than me but always take that as a complement. For a successful conjugal life one needs to remain free from ego irrespective of gender,” he says with conviction.

Asked if he has done enough, Riyaz Shrestha thinks for a while and says he has done what he could to give his famous wife the freedom she needs to strive and grow.

Shrejana Shrestha

Pratyoush Onta

On his first day back to work after maternity leave in 2009, Kama Prasuri spent 10 hours preparing a video program for ABC Nepal Service. Her husband Pratyoush Oonta was home, feeding their one-year-old son and changing his diapers.

On a visit to him and editor with Martin Chaudari, didn’t just babysit Prasuri as the couple raised their two sons, but has been a source of constant encouragement for her professional career.

As an academic, I have tried to provide her intellectual support. This entails discussing ideas, providing copies of relevant writings and linking her with people she might want to talk with,” says Oonta.

But then I have been doing this at my office and for everyone who has asked for such help from me. So it just feels like an extension of my work,” Oonta doesn’t consider taking care of the children in

Pratyoush Oonta was a contributing editor at Almaty and tried to bridge the gap between journalism and academia. That was when they met, and got married two years later.

When Oonta received a research fellowship in India and the UK Prasuri took leave without pay to accompany him.

“Her past made her feel she was an extension to his working hours, and I think it’s something we should all do more,” says Oonta.

Many couples in married relationships support each other now, it is not so exceptional. You can expect one person in the relationship to make all the sacrifices all the time,” says Oonta. “If you have a public life you will have to decide which things are more of a priority. It is very important for men to be more committed to helping raise the family.”

Oonta also admits that people change with the times and learn many things as they travel. He says, the decision to support the spouse doesn’t only depend on education and class background.

However, he thinks parity in Nepali society allows men to get away with a lot. In Nepali men do little but get to try too many credits,” he says, and jokes: “I’m afraid it’s the same with me here.”

Sonia Awale

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**EVENTS**

**Women’s Day,**
Mark this day dedicated to women by celebrating their success and struggles.

**Vagina Monologues,**
I leaf out female voices on sex, relationships and violence against women in the Women’s Day fundraiser show.

**Squat competition,**
Register to participate in the 2nd interclub women’s squat competition organised by Jasmine Fitness and Spa on the occasion of Women’s Day.

**Women run,**
Jog or walk for women empowerment. In this run organized to mark the International Women’s Day.

**Monday morning queries,**
Network, interact and learn together with other entrepreneurs, students and start-ups over coffee and bunuelo delights.

---

**MUSIC**

**Capturing fashion,**
Learn the ropes of fashion photography with Sanjog Rai in a three-day workshop.

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Sip on a potation, binging listen to the Nepali fusion trio Kanto da-ko-ba.

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**MISS MOTIVATION**

**Kripa Joshi,**
The grass is greener. Where you water it.
Making Nepal FDI friendly

We know what needs to be done to attract investment, we just need to do it.

Least-developed countries like Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Haiti mobilised FDI worth $169 million and $224 million, respectively, in 2015.

The early 1990s saw a dramatic rise in FDI inflows into Nepal, primarily in garments, carpets and food processing industries, stimulating job creation in the industrial sector, and expanding the manufacturing sector. Nepal’s manufacturing sold at all time high of 9.6% of GDP in 1996. But the conflict and instability reduced FDI inflows in the late 1990s.

Although FDI has rebounded since 2006, the bulk of it has come mostly in energy and tourism services, and not in manufacturing. The industrial sector shrank to 15.4% of GDP and manufacturing to 6.3% of GDP in 2015. Slow job creation has resulted in expansion of the informal economy and overseas job migration.

For the past two decades, Nepal failed to be part of global production networks while Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam attracted FDI in textiles and clothing, and moved steadily up the value chain. These countries also experienced rapid income and productivity growth for a mass of their industrial labor force. India and China, which currently dominate world manufacturing (accounting for 25% of global manufacturing) are upgrading to produce high-technology goods, including vehicles, machinery, machinery spare parts and smart phones by opening up these sectors to FDI.

Nepal must take stock of its own experience as well as draw upon that of its neighbors to mobilise greater FDI. The first lulus test is to institutionalise an FDI friendly regime so that all state agencies to coordinate effectively and welcome FDI as a general principle. A negative list of industries and business in the government’s proposed new FDI law might be valid from the viewpoint of protecting small producers but would prevent those sectors from reaping productivity gains.

The Foreign Investment Related Act 2017 (which will replace Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act 1992) needs to be supported by new laws regulating agriculture, the labour market and infrastructure. Various studies have reiterated the urgency of reforms in these three crucial areas as well as in addressing regulatory barriers.

The absence of contract farming legislation limits economies of scale in farm production. Nepal is currently import-dependent on both staple and cash crops, whose domestic production is short of fulfilling domestic demand. Frequent labour disputes and politically-motivated disruptions have relegated Nepal’s formal non-agricultural sector to a low productivity trap, shielded from competition and new investments.

An immediate outcome of opening protected sectors to FDI and allowing labour flexibility can bring a marked improvement in Nepal’s manufacturing and export performance. Preferences provided to Nepal’s products (both agricultural and manufactured) by both developing and industrialised nations will fall sort of production and safety standards.

The country must deliver on large energy, transport and communication projects to lower transaction costs and boost return on investments. Improvement in the ease of doing business (identified by Doing Business, WB) should also be one of the main priorities. Rwanda, an LDC like Nepal, was ranked 56 among 190 economies in DB 2017. It attracted $332 million in FDI – six times more than what Nepal, ranked at 197, received – in 2015.

Many conflict-struck and transition economies are making a complete turnaround from their poor economic performance by adopting FDI friendly policies. As a small landlocked LDC emerging from conflict and transition, Nepal must make up for two decades of lost growth and forgo opportunities.

The state should ensure a participatory development process, strengthen governance and incentives economic agents. The private sector must show it is capable of mobilising resources to promote growth. Both must form a partnership in driving the country’s industrial policy forward. #ShyamalKShrestha

The clever metalsmith

Akil Man Nakarmi passed away last month. His quiet, unassuming manner was overlooked by a nation preoccupied with the constitution and elections. Self-effacing and shy, it was just like the man to slip away quietly without letting anyone know.

His first name and surname described him accurately. Akil means ‘clever’, and Nakarmi is the Newari occupational name for traditional metalsmiths. He was clever with his hands, could work on iron, copper and bronze and shape them into anything as if it was wax.

I first visited Nakarmi’s family-owned workshop called Kathmandu Metal Industries in Chhaepati with his partner-in-innovation, Swiss engineer Andreas Bachmann, in the 1980s. We walked through a warren of narrow alleys where the sun never shined, stopping through a low door to enter a courtyard filled with transformers, turbines and tools.

Nakarmi’s ancestors crafted copper and bronze pots and other utensils of deities. Bachmann and Nakarmi had been working on using the same technology to make bronze Pelton turbines for micro-hydroelectric power generation. At one point, there was such high demand for these Pelton Seas that Nakarmi’s workshop couldn’t keep up with demand.

Within a decade there were more than 3,000 micro-hydro plants in Nepal. Farmers rushed to install them with soft loans from the Agriculture Development Bank. "This is the answer to rural electrification, not a $500 million dam," Nakarmi would say, holding the turbine in his palm.

A whole section of Nakarmi’s workshop was devoted to an assembly line for the Multi-purpose Power Units (MPPU) which converted traditional water mills by entering the woodwheels with more efficient curved metal blades and ballbearings. The system not just processed food, it also produced power through a dynamo. Within a decade, nearly half the 30,000 or so traditional ghutta in Nepal had been converted into MPPUs and were even exported to Bhutan, Ladhak and Sri Lanka.

Bachmann and Nakarmi produced a monograph in 1983 in which they provided meticulous drawings to show how traditional water mills could be upgraded and upscaled for rural electrification and agro-based industries. The MPPU kit came in three easy-to-assemble modules. Farmers could not just grab corn, but ran through the machinery, saw mills and latches during the day time and have electricity at night.

Nakarmi won the Rolex Award and the Right Livelihood Award, but he kept quiet about them. He preferred to work away in his workshop right till the end of his life. “All I did was use indigenous knowledge of Nepali farmers, and I just made the system more efficient by adding ball bearings and shaping the paddles,” he told me once.

Nakarmi never spoke long enough to expound on his philosophy in life, but if he did, perhaps it would come closest to the ‘Small is Beautiful’ concept put forward by B F Schumacher in the 1960s. small, decentralised and self-contained energy systems do not do well when they are not designed to create the environment, are cheap and can be built and maintained locally.

Schnucharger showed that human civilisation can reduce its ecological footprint with the use of appropriate and benevolent technologies that do not squander the planet’s finite resources. The path ahead for humankind, he said, was to do a lot with a lot less.

Nakarmi did not talk about it, but he designed practical solutions and set an example for the world long before we had ever heard of peak oil or climate change. Indeed, if we had heeded his vision, Nepal would not suffer power cuts for so long.

Today in Nepal, we are busy building gigantic national pride projects. Soon, there will be high dams on major snowfed rivers that feed power to everrising consumer demand in the cities and maybe even for export. Cold power has replaced many of the micro-hydro and MPPUs that Nakarmi helped build.

For a brief time during the innocent early days of development when Nepal was still dark, Akil Man Nakarmi was a beacon of light showing us the path to eco-and people-friendly development.

Ruma Ditt
MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Now that the Academy Awards fiasco is over, it is time to shift the focus to some films that were entirely snubbed by the Academy and its voters.

Nonetheless, they managed to actually get it right this year, even when the presenters (poor old Warren Beatty, and not so poor Faye Dunaway) got it wrong initially -- a monumental blunder that announced the incorrect film as winner of no less that the Best Picture category. The hapless La La Land team was on stage making speeches before men with headsets and Jimmy Kimmel, the show's host, clarified that it was actually Moonlight, the underdog and critic’s darling, that had really won, No, really.

While some things did get done right, overlooking Jessica Chastain's awe inducing, powerhouse performance in Miss Sloane, John Madden's political thriller, is a shocking lapse.

Chastain is riveting on screen as Elizabeth Sloane, a brilliant, hardened mastermind who lobbies for a living, taking on challenges that appeal to her just to show that she can win. The woman is always two steps ahead of her opponent and losing is not an option.

When Elizabeth Sloane takes on a case that involves lobbying for increased gun control, she comes up against some of the most ruthless politicians in America, willing to do whatever it takes to quash any move against their entrenched hegemony and vested interests; unfortunately, while some may think there is too much hyperbole here, the current American administration is a pretty clear example of the disgraceful means to which people will resort to get what they want.

Miss Sloane is a character study of an extraordinary, enigmatic schemer with real issues when it comes to drawing lines between right and wrong. What makes the film so compelling is Chastain's ability to humanise a brilliant, hardworking woman who is also deeply troubled.

There are real sociopaths out there in the world, people who lie compulsively, think they are amazing because they have the loudest voice and the biggest laugh, and harass women while they are at it, thinking nothing of their casual, enraged sexism as they move towards their goals of money and power – apparently the only things worth having no matter the cost.

In this film, as Elizabeth Sloane learns, and, regretfully, also in real life, these people are not just confined to politics, they operate in every sphere, usually with an impunity that only feeds their dangerous vanity.

Meanwhile, in a powerful movie about morality and humanity, a highly talented actor has been left on the sidelines. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact she plays a character that is a flawed, difficult, outspoken, ambitious woman.

This is an edge of your seat thriller. It also has the unusual quality of actually having a really important life lesson: in the end it is not “getting ahead” but how you treat people that really matters.
Interviewing Rabindra Mishra

Do you have what it takes to transform politics? It is a huge challenge to put our politics back on track. But many countries which were in a worse situation than ours are now developed and stable. I am confident that we can turn around things in Nepal too. My biggest asset is the support of honest and like-minded Nepalis. Our primary task is to diversify in terms of ethnicity, age, and profession. We hope more people will join us as we move forward.

When did you first think about joining politics? I returned from the UK to spend part of my time in philanthropy. But this was like trying to fill the Ranak Pratami with a bucket of water. We built 40 libraries, but over 32,000 schools in Nepal do not have libraries. So I thought the only way is to join politics.

Why a new party? I thought that those in existing parties would turn me into one of them. They look at the appointments of the new prime minister and ambassadors.

What is your party’s take on the democracy movements of 1990 and 2006? We always blame our constitution and political system for our problems. We are always fighting to change them. Our constitution was written in a democratic way, and we can develop Nepal within its framework.

There are doubts about whether elections will be held in May. We can solve it in Parliament. We must address genuine grievances of the Madhesi people, but some of their demands are not genuine, and will benefit only a few Madhesi leaders. The political leadership can decide whether to go for federalism, but the form of federalism has to be decided by experts.

The Madhesi parties were left out of the constitution making process, isn’t that a problem? A constitution is a work in progress. It has to be improved constantly. Some problems are due to a lack of trust. Whether we separate Madhesi from hills or keep them together while creating provocation does not make a difference.

Shouldn’t you have tried to clean up journalism before trying to clean up politics? The problems that plague journalism are an offshoot of our corrupt politics. If you clean up politics, you can clean up everything, including journalism.

Will your party contest local elections? The time to organize political parties at the Election Commission has already passed, so we cannot contest local elections. We will see if we can field some independent candidates. But our target is national elections.

Setopati: Can you tell us about the perks of your job at BBC Nepali Service? I drew a monthly salary of Rs 700,000. The office gave me a car, health insurance for me and four members of my family, and paid my telephone bill. A journalist cannot expect more than this in Nepal. But from tomorrow, I will not be earning a paisa. Then how will you survive? I have savings. And I will be collecting rent from my two houses. I also have to pay back some loans, will be devoting at least 15-16 hours a day to politics, and will work honestly.

More tourists?

Editorial in Nagarkot, March 1

The Nepali Tourism Board is about to launch its ‘Visit Nepal’ promotional ad campaign in the international media with a target of attracting a record number of tourists. But imagine the horror of tourists visiting Nepal for its natural beauty when they are confronted with a chaotic airport and congested, slushy roads. How does it make sense to bring more tourists if the capital’s streets are choking in pollution? What will the message will it send out to the rest of the world?

Nepal Tourism Board is confident that an international ad campaign will help Nepal’s tourism recover from the earthquake. It has allocated $60 million for the campaign. The international tourism would be banned until 2018. The earthquake has not only increased the cost of construction, and the country is still locked in. The cost of promotional campaign will bring in more tourists. But will they come here? We are limited to old tourism products, and it’s actually domestic tourism that has come to the rescue. The industry needs to upgrade its products, offer new activities, streamline procedures so tourists stay longer than the average 13 days and spend more. The revenue should be ploughed into revamping our infrastructure. How about concentrating our energies on making things up at home before launching an international promotion?
A 29-year-old patient was operated on for appendicitis at Bijaypur Hospital in Dharan last week. The surgery went well, but the patient choked on food and died during recovery. Angry relatives mobilised a crowd and vandalised the hospital. The matter was resolved only after the hospital agreed to pay compensation if an investigation proved negligence.

In September 2015, a two-year-old infant suffering from abdominal pain and vomiting died after being admitted to a government hospital in Charkot. Rowdy political cadre and hoodlums entered the hospital and abused medical personnel, posting humiliating pictures of a doctor begging for mercy on YouTube. Family members refused to take the baby’s body.

A young man in his early 40s was admitted for minor surgery at Patan Hospital, but in post-op he was oversedated by relatives. Combined with a pre-existing sleep apnea condition, the patient died. A large crowd formed inside the hospital demanding compensation, and the relatives refused to take the body unless the hospital paid compensation. The case was settled after the treatment fee was waived, and the widow was offered a job.

Imitating nature

Nepal’s most modern printing facility, Jagadamba Press, now makes natural colours come alive with its state-of-the-art equipment.

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SONIA AWALE

T

here is not a week that goes by that a hospital isn’t vandali

zed or health workers assaulted by angry mobs after a re

duce their daily duties or being treated. Doctors say the
testifies to the intense political and social tensions in the
demoralized medical personnel are now reluctant to treat
patients who are in serious condition, and refer compli
contaminated cases to other hospitals. Patients are there

To be sure, over

commer-    

ically privatized private hospitals threaten medical
malpractice by poorly trained doctors, and unintentional
lapses after admission have fed public perception that
doctors are reckless and unscrupulous.

However, a Nepal Times investigation of several recent
cases of hospital vandalism and abuse shows that victims
are not so much a result of grief or bereavement be
more often than not, they are regarded as a form of political
activism to cash in on tragedy.

“If a person who walked into hospital for a check up ends up
dead, it is natural for relatives to be upset, but there are people
who make the situation worse and take advantage of
the case to attack and threaten hospitals to extract
money,” says Gopi Neupane, former general secretary of the
Association of Private Health Institutions Nepal (APHIN).

Most hospital administrators, doctors and nurses interviewed
for this report did not want to be named. But each related
multiple cases in which they were assaulted, verbally abused
by mobs, and their hospitals burned

ON GUARD: Rot police in Dhan

A major epidemic of hospital vandal

ism is the United Nations High Commissioner for

On a recent visit to Kathmandu,

Sri Lanka, Ms. P. Vulage, the UN

High Commissioner for

Migrants, said:

“Violent attacks on health workers

and health facilities during epidemics

are unacceptable. Both the

victims and the perpetrators

must be held accountable.”

NATIONAL

15

One case she recalls vividly

is of a patient who died at

childbirth, but her baby survived.

injured in the process. Although

One day, when a patient died at Tirthari Hospital, the relatives

followed legal procedures for justice. An investigation found

evidence of negligence and medical malpractice, and the

family was fully compensated without any

The government has been

taken steps to increase security and

The long-term solutions to

vandalism include legal

reforms and stronger

enforcement of laws.

One of the main concerns

expressed by health workers

is the lack of proper training

and protection.

As a result, health workers

often feel vulnerable and afraid.

A recent study showed that

more than 50% of health workers

reported feeling unsafe at work.

One potential solution

is to increase the number of

security personnel in hospitals.

Another approach is to

improve the working conditions

of health workers, such as

providing proper uniforms

and ensuring access to

emergency services.

In conclusion, tackling

vandalism requires a multi

disciplinary approach that

involves government, hospitals,

and the community.

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THE TIMES OF NEPAL
It is rocket science

As a card-carrying cyclist, it is usually difficult for me to see a film shot in Nepal at the end of the so-called narrow tunnel while also seeing the glass as it reportedly half-empty. It is not meant for anyone to get stuck in the door, and I am supposed to see the symbol of a series of bullet trains and papers at the corners of the train to the divers by importing regular primitive programs to broadcast breaking news of few grossly-designed helicopters. Nepal is today being described as where no Nepal for gone before, and this includes mingling to the Federal States of Micronesia.

Last week, the Prime Minister Bhattarai had a helicopter to Bhumipal to निताविकर ने दिया हेलिकप्टर था...-

“The reason this helicopter doesn’t fly in the air, the government didn’t help me,” BK told reporters, adding that he is trying to bring some minor problems like the fact that the nation does not generate any thrust at all and the craft weighs half a ton. Prime Minister Bhattarai instructed Energy Minister Janardan Sharma to make BK’s chopper lift off. If the Camadek Bhattarai can even fly, then can allow them to have permission.

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