Strongman rule

A new Civil and Criminal Code Act came into effect on Friday, fears were raised that Nepal’s strongmen rulers could misuse clauses in it to crush political dissent, muzzle the media, or punish doctors. Particularly worrying are clauses that are subject to interpretation and can be used by present and future authorities to send journalists to jail for breach of privacy or defamation, or punish doctors whose patients die during treatment.

People found guilty of unauthorised listening to or recording private conversations can be imprisoned up to two years or fined Rs20,000, or both. People found guilty of taking, selling or circulating pictures of a person without his or her consent can be imprisoned up to three years and/or fined Rs30,000.

Shiva Gaunlet at the Centre for Investigative Journalism (CII) Nepal says the people’s right to privacy must be respected, but there should be exceptions if recordings and photos are of public figures for use in the media. “The new Criminal Code Act will prevent investigative journalists from doing their job,” he says.

If these new laws had been enacted a few months ago, for instance, Prime Minister KP’s and Nepali Congress co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal could have had his editors behind bars for publishing the picture in which they were seen eating lunch with Daako Prasad, the owner of B&K Hospital in Patan.

The private photo was posted on Facebook, but it was visual proof of a nexus between Nepal’s two top leaders with a businessman lobbying for a bill that would have allowed him to run a private medical college.

Article 307 (1) of the Criminal Code Act also allows the court to imprison people guilty of character assassination for up to two years. But if the defamation is in the mass media, the journalist can be jailed for one more year. Senior Advocate Satish Krishna Kharel says: “This is proof that the new laws can be used to restrain the media.”

Doctors found guilty of negligence leading to the death of a patient can also now be sent to jail for up to five years. Kharei says the new laws are even more dangerous because government attorney can now file cases against any doctor. The accused will then be jailed until proven innocent.

The new law has also watered down some stringent provisions aimed at tackling violence against women. For example, a husband guilty of raping his wife used to have a 3-5 year jail term. Now, the law says he can be jailed for up to five years – leaving a loophole for a lighter sentence.

The new Code will replace Nepal’s 45-year-old Muanki Ain, and does have some positive points:

- Bars menstrual harassment
- Increases the minimum age of marriage to 19
- Interprets sex with persons younger than 16 as rape even if consensual
- Criminalizes torture
- Punishes abortion to suicide
- Discourages dowry

Om Astha Rai

Bijuli ko tar, tar, tar ...

Why the capital is a tangle of overhead wires, and what can be done about it.

PAGE 5
STATESWOMANSHIP

Nepal’s 2003 Constitution, we have been told, in its 10th year, gives its ambiguity on gender, there is a lot of work left to be done.

The government is working in its progress. Indeed, the ambiguity on gender, there is a lot of work left to be done. A new Constitution is the cornerstone of Nepal’s constitutional framework.

Unfortunately, in Nepal, the local administration that interprets the spirit of the constitution is steeped in patriarchy. And so, a few exceptions where there are enlightened local officials, or mothers who have fought hard and hard to get their offspring Nepal citizenship, many children have been left out.

The very first line of Chapter 2 of Nepal’s Constitution states: ‘No citizen of Nepal may be deprived of the right to obtain citizenship. It goes on to say that a person whose father or mother (or both if it is a woman) makes a world of difference’ was a citizen of Nepal at his or her birth can also be a citizen of Nepal by descent.

But despite these clear provisions that guarantee equal citizenship rights, other clauses of the Constitution, and laws adding it’s but and so leaving many requirements for citizenship de facto.

The Constitution of a person whose father or mother is a Nepali citizen will get citizenship by descent, but this is not applicable if the mother is married to a foreign man.

In the end, that the mothers who give birth to sons whose fathers are absent, unknown, or who have been discriminated against, cannot automatically get citizenship for their children. Many Nepali women have traditionally been treated within their families, communities and by the state as inferior, this Constitution and the Bill is supposed instead ofrediressing a historical wrong, perpetuates the injustice.

There are two aspects on discrimination:

1. Given how good politicians and bureaucrats are at distorting the laws to suit their interest, there should be no room for any manipulation in the law. The state should not be given any reason to distort laws to suit them away with another.

2. Should clearly state that the children of Nepali women will get citizenship even if she does not have any citizenship of her husband’s citizenship. The mother’s citizenship and the birth certificate of the children should be enough. CDOs have no right to ask who the father is.

WHATS TRENDING

Do Nepali attitudes need to be decolonised?

by Mani Sure

The popular slogan of Nepal is “touch me not”, but the modern Nepali woman has grown beyond those attitudes. Her desire to wear pants and her talent to express her thoughts, makes her a woman with courage.

Most mostread and shared on Facebook

How many tigers in Nepal?

by Rishi Dhakal

The tiger is a symbol of Nepal’s biodiversity and culture. The tiger’s population in Nepal is estimated to be around 250 individuals. This number is subject to fluctuations due to various factors such as poaching and habitat loss.

Most popular on Twitter

Family separation, Bhutan-style

by Praveen Mahal

The Trump-Effect is growing exponentially as the Bhutanese government’s policy of separating families is gaining momentum. The Bhutanese government has introduced a policy to separate parents from their children to ensure the children’s education and upbringing.

Most visited online page

QUOTE

"A Nepali woman’s role is to help, make Kathmandu a healthier, more vibrant city. Let’s adopt a more positive health system that not only targets health but also focuses on the overall well-being of citizens. Let’s work together to make Kathmandu a safer place for all.”

— Pratikshya Jha

TWEETS

Nepali Times (Nepal Times) 2077-10-21 6:30 PM
Nepal Times: 2077-10-20 6:30 PM
Nepal Times: 2077-10-22 6:30 PM

Weekly Twitter poll #3

2. Why do women continue to have limited rights in working on their citizenship to their upbringing?

Total votes: 134

Weekly Facebook poll #4

2. People want more protection and rights.

Total votes: 179

Weekly Instagram poll #3

1. People want more protection and rights.

Total votes: 148

What is your view on the Nepali Woman?

Online Packages

YES, Prime Minister

The popular slogan of Nepali people is “touch me not”, but the modern Nepali woman has grown beyond those attitudes. Her desire to wear pants and her talent to express her thoughts, makes her a woman with courage.

Most commented

More videos on health, environment, culture, heritage and Nepali politics.

Nepali Times YouTube Channel.

A LONG WAY TO GO

Canada has treated its indigenous peoples outrageously for hundreds of years (Do Nepali attitudes need to be decolonised?; Mark Turc; #922). This era of reconciliation currently underway in Canada is a good start, but we in Nepal are a long way off from praying to others on how to make amends.

Kate Coffey

THANK YOU

The Nepali Times has been covering psychological disorders a lot (Raising children can be therapy; Kateri Ixti; #921). Such coverage will help reduce the social stigma associated with mental health. Thank you.

Anurita Shaha

HELL TOURISM

The abuse of hell tourism for ‘take-back injuries and stress’ creates a much bigger problem than the old tourist fight (Choppers to ABC banned; Yuvraj Shrestha; #920).

Sue Chamberlain

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The Nepali Times edition #41 dated 23 July 2003 featured Pushpa Kamal Dahal on the front page after the then prime minister after his party’s victory in elections, there is a word Aurka Man Chaudhary who said about the Dahal-guru commune that he was to be there as the most Aryan choice.

As the government finally comes, the Constitution清晰ly. Hope abounds of a return to democratic governance, a change in the social system, draping the new Constitution, and the end of tyrannical politics in the forest, social development and economic development.

If the anti-social is not to be Mao, and politics is left to a certain term that means the domination of the Maoist, being young and able to be revolutionary, political, democrat, party. This will request the battle which has taken place in the heart of these officers. As the new price exists, a mild and a Durga, the society must stand true to itself, finally, publicly and finally express the value as a spiritual, physical, and financial resource.

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For more online videos, health, environment, culture, heritage, and Nepali politics, visit Nepali Times YouTube channel.

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Caring for those who cared

As the young migrant, a growing demand for home care for their parents reshapes health services in Nepal

Sikuma Rai

A s a married, working woman with a child, it was impossible for her to demise Bejancharya to take days off for her ailing parents. They needed physiotherapy, but her father refused to visit a hospital. So they had to get the physiotherapist at home. Both are recovering, thanks to home treatment.

Doctors call Nepal, which provided the service to Bejancharya and medical personnel of many new home care services that have come up in Nepal as the population ages, and their offspring are either abroad or busy at work.

“My father is very talkative, so I was worried that he might offend the doctor on call,” Bejancharya says, “but the whole experience turned out to be very useful both for my parents and me, because of good communication and coordination. Now I know I have someone to turn to if my parents need care again.”

Home care has also helped provide jobs in Nepal for staff nurses and caregivers who may have otherwise have migrated abroad. In turn, as more and more young Nepalis go abroad to study or work, there is a growing demand for nurses who can take care of elderly parents at home, or take them to hospital for treatment.

Another service provider is Health at Home (lower, below) which was established in 2009 and has now grown into a nationwide network with units in Pokhara, Chitwan and Kathmandu besides Kathmandu.

“The West, every hospital has a home care unit. Its prospects in Nepal indicate that it is the future of medical care, which needs continuous innovation,” says founder Bishal Thakali.

Health at Home and others provide a range of services from nurses, doctors, physiotherapists and lab technicians on call to caretakers, travel support and appointment management. Many provide full doctoral supervision, while a few outsource nurses and caregivers only.

The demand for care-givers is new in Nepal, and has grown exponentially to a growing demand. Their work includes non-professional assistance which nurses do not perform, and some families prefer male health assistants.

Health at Home and Shreedha Sahuk-health Service outsource female nurses and caregivers, employing more than a hundred trained personnel each, and one-third of them have been hired by Nepal Flying Ambulance who want their parents cared for.

Along with improvements in physical health, many doctors and clients have also felt that such services have positive effects on the minds of elderly people who prefer not to go to a hospital. A simple follow up call or a quick visit brightens up the mood of elderly people who are often lonely, anxious or depressed because of health issues and separation from children.

While the increasing demand has led to the mushrooming of home care in Kathmandu, doctors and experts are worried that the quality of care may go down and put the health of the elderly at risk.

Ramesh Kadel, Nepal’s first Geriatric Specialist, expresses concern over nurses trained in specialized care of the elderly.

He says, “Service providers should keep hospitals and doctors in the loop. Our society is not fully geriatric friendly yet, and negligence of elderly people’s health is still prevalent, we need to be more aware and careful.”

For the first time in world history, the population of people above 60 has exceeded that of children below 5, and in 30 years more people will likely be growing in hospital beds than babies will be born. Doctors on Call Nepal and Health at Home also have a guided selection procedure and orientation program for nurses and caregivers, and a systematic recording of their patients to maintain quality.

Health care at more homes

I love care for the elderly is a social enterprise that runs as a business, while providing a public service. One of the companies in this growing sector in Nepal is Health at Home, which won the Surya Nepal Award in 2012 for a socially responsible business.

Nine years after its birth, Health at Home has grown into a nationwide network for home care service with centres in Pokhara, Kathmandu and Lalitpur, besides Chitwan and Hirtangudi providing much needed care at home for Nepal’s rapidly ageing population.

With young men and women migrating abroad for work, there is an increasing demand for children to care for their elderly parents, Health at Home is planning to open four more centres and provide jobs in Nepal for staff nurses and caregivers.

“When we started, it was a small idea. With innovation, the idea turned into an industry and today we look forward to be an influencer that provides global standard health facility in the comfort of a patient’s own home,” explains founder Bishal Thakali.

As it grew, the company has incorporated in its structure with four partners, and CEO Amit Shrestha. The idea is to serve people in their community by building care capacity through an accountable, transparent and predictable process.

“The concept of home care ten years ago was just to send nurses home to take care of the elderly. We are trying to constantly innovate and meet demands from patients for special care,” says Dhakal.

Shrestha says Health at Home is poised to be a global player in virtual health care. The company is partnering with Samsung to invent a virtual platform for data management of home care parameters. This means doctors and health management team do not need to visit homes, and can monitor patients remotely, making visits only if intervention is required.

“We want to redefine health care for the new generation with new technology,” says Shrestha.

Health at Home customers have requirements from postnatal to elderly care, patients with chronic diseases, the terminally ill, and dependent patients.

The company ties up with hospitals like Mediciti, Niloan, Nepal Cancer Hospital, Sumun and Green City, and insurance companies like Mediciti, Reliance and Citizen Life and various diagnostic labs and pathologies. And there are additional services like Japanese massage therapy and nurse placements with home care specialisation.

So far, Health at Home has built up a reputation for skilled and personalised care that is responsive to the needs of patients.

With Nepal’s population expected to reach 33 million by 2020 with nearly 10% of them above 65, there will be an ever-greater need for elderly care. Combined with outmigration of the young, this means the field is wide open for innovation and expansion in home care services.

Sikuma Rai
Monika Deupala

The jumble of wires above Kathmandu’s streets may be an eyesore for residents, but they have become the city’s latest tourist attraction. Instead of temple landmarks, visitors seem more intrigued by monkeys clustering on overhead wires above Kathmandu’s intersections.

However, the tangle of transmission lines, phone wires, fibre optic and TV cables that wrap the city in giant black spider webs have become dangerous because they are too heavy for the flimsy poles.

Several maintenance crew members have been electrocuted in the past two years, and there have been a rash of fires that could easily have gone out of control. The wires are so knotted up that repair teams often give up trying to fix the problem.

But just like potholes, polluted air and crumbling sidewalks, residents of the capital have given up expecting the elected city government to solve the problem.

Till now. This week, the government suddenly realized just how badly the city looked, and the Municipality sprang into action to streamline the wires and pave roads that have turned into muddy rivers this monsoon.

The reason for this was a war footing in not public pressure, but the need to spruce up the streets ahead of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Summit later this month when the leaders of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand will descend on Kathmandu.

The stretch of roads from the airport to Soaltee Hotel, and to the Hyatt Regency are getting facelifts, and unruly overhead wires are being toned. The leaders of Buddhist countries like Burma, Sri Lanka and Thailand may also deign to visit Bhaktapur, the electricity poles and sidewalks along the road to the temple are also being cleaned up.

“What do we, have to impress the important guests,” said one supervisor, as his team tied wires into neat bundles atop a ladder at Chabahil intersection this week.

The poles are mostly owned by the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) which has a nominal charge for vendors who want to rent it. However, there is no regulation and no monitoring of who is actually hanging wires along the pylons.

“There is no oversight, that is why it looks like a jungle out there,” says Dileep Agrawal of the internet service provider, Worldlink. “But it can easily be solved with better regulation and restriction on the number of wires.”

Last week, in a belated attempt to control the situation, the NEA announced a hefty 20 percent increase in fees for those who want to rent poles to pull wires. Currently, ISPs pay Rs60 per year per pole. The new tariffs will calculate rental depending on per km distance, and the weight of the wire used.

Even though they lobbied for regulation, the association of internet service providers (ISPs) and cable operators say the price increase is too much. ISPs that pay Rs2.5 million will be paying Rs5 million with the new tariffs.

The problem has been complicated because the NEA’s poles are under the jurisdiction of the Energy Ministry, whereas the ISPs and cable operators come under the Communication Ministry. ISPs recently agreed with Communication Minister Mahesh Bahadur to absorb the government’s recent internet tax hike in return for a promise not to increase other fees.

Said one cable operator, “We were taken shock by the huge increase, it will not solve the problem. Given the corruption, it will not reduce the number of wires, and the cost increase will not mean NEA will upgrade maintenance of its poles.”

For its part, NEA blames private internet and cable companies for putting up wires haphazardly without permits, and has forced them to help with cleaning up the mess before BIMSTEC.

The NEA is negotiating with the Asian Development Bank to take wires underground, but costs are prohibitive. Even NEA’s own engineer Lak免费 Agarwal says underground wiring is not suitable for a city in which there are so many private buildings.

“It is very costly to take cables underground, it takes a long time, and can be dangerous with all the haphazard digging that goes on here,” Agarwal said.

Cities in Japan and Korea, whose power utilities have to service private urban households have overhead wires, but they are strictly regulated. If it is any consolation to Kathmandu residents, overhead wires in parts of Bangkok and Dhaka are even more unsightly.

Existing the price of pole rentals alone will not be the answer. ISPs and cable operators will simply pass the cost on to clients with a 10 percent increase in subscription rates, says Dileep Agrawal. “The wires are not a problem. They are a problem only if no one wants to do anything about it.”

Bijuli ko tar, tar, tar ...

It will take a long time before the capital’s streets can become wireless
Sun striped shadows
Close encounters of a wild kind in Chitwan

Encountering a tiger in the wild is a once in a lifetime experience. Lisa Choegyal, a former USA national security adviser with his wife and Tiger Tops shikaris pose with Mrs Binda Sha, Jim Edwards and Prabhakar SBI Rana with the tranquilized man-eating tigress in Chitwan January, 1985. Despite such controversies, tiger sightings in the wild are never certain. Even after we stopped hunting and depend on our naturalists skill, every year only one quarter of all Tiger Tops guests were fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of the planet’s largest cat.

And for me, every time was a moment of magic and quiet respect that such splendour exists on this earth. Originally protected as a sanctuary for Nepal’s Greater One-horned Rhinoceros (Rhinoceros unicornis), the fame of Chitwan was soon usurped by the tiger’s elusive glamour, the undisputed star of the show. Even the Latin name resonates with awe and mystery: Panthera tigris.

Chitwan’s rich habitat, watered by the Rapti and Narayani rivers with alluvial grasslands, mixed riverine forest and the salt-covered Chure Hills, had long been set aside by ruling Ranas as prime hunting country, reserved as a refuge to impress a favoured few royals, viceroys and maharajahs. The Shah kings were required to prove their bravery with big cats and perform obscure religious rites that included climbing inside the carcass of a slaughtered rhino.

During Queen Elizabeth’s visit in 1981, for which Meghwal was appointed as part of the game drive, Prince Philip famously refused to shoot. Yesterday’s hunters were evolving into today’s conservationists, and cameras were replacing guns. Throughout its range, Asia’s apex predator had become critically endangered due to a combination of loss of habitat, depletion of prey species, human conflict, poaching and hunting. South Asian tigers drastically dwindled to less than 2,500 from an estimated population of 40,000 at the turn of the century, plummeting to less than 3,500 from 100,000 worldwide.

In response, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in 1973 launched Project Tiger throughout India, and the same year Chitwan’s 900-kilometre square of endangered biodiversity were gazetted as Nepal’s first national park. Designated a national World Heritage Site in 1984, and (inlock with adjacent reserves in the huge tiger conservation landscape of India and Bangladesh) in 1986, Royal Chitwan National Park rapidly became renowned as one of the best wildlife-viewing experiences in Asia, especially for the increasingly rare Royal Bengal tiger.

At Tiger Tops, a resort lodge deep in tiger country since 1984, we were inevitably enthralled and engrossed with its protection. An ideal base for wildlife research and filming, Chuck pioneered cameducation and helped the Smithsonian Institute’s radio tracking and long-term tiger monitoring.

In the 1980’s, Bob Hawkes got too close for comfort during a tiger documentary in Bardia, and Leonardo DiCaprio’s screen adaptation of the novel Tigermist, in millions of dollars of WWF support. In 2010, St Petersburg Declaration, 13 countries endorsed the Global Tiger Recovery Plan and allocated the doubling of the tiger population worldwide by 2020, the next Chinese Year of the Tiger. Nepal committed to expand its tiger population from 128 to about 250. By 2013 we had already achieved 63% of this goal with 198 tigers resident mainly in Chitwan, but also Bardia, Shuklaphanta, Parsa and Baska protected areas. Nepal should live a world without wild tigers. We await the national report on the attainment of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation 2018 census, but Nepal’s tigers remain a powerful tourist icon and a potent symbol of Nepal’s conservation success.

Ink & Water
Reflect the colours of nature more accurately with high quality precision printing in state-of-the-art Jagadamba Press.
When 44 girls were rescued from sexual abuse and torture in a children’s home in Muzzafarpur in Bihar in May, it made headlines in India. What went unnoticed was that seven of children were Nepali.

The shelter run by Sewa Bankalpy Avan Vich Samiti was raided after reports of abuse, and its head Rajesh Thakur arrested. After trying several times, Shalini CM of the child charity Chora Chori was finally able to bring home to Nepal the three girls and four boys.

Now, safe in the Chora Chori shelter in Kathmandu the children are being treated for psychological trauma. They have difficulty in communicating because of their mental scars, are fearful of strangers, and the staff are still working to build trust with them.

“Some of the children were quiteullen, and their silence made communication difficult,” says Anita Dangol, counselor at Chora Chori, which has been rescuing many Nepali children trafficked to India.

Dongol and Shalini Rajbandari have been trying out a new way of rehabilitating the children with therapy, after being trained by British therapist Debbie Mintz. Therapy imitates the earliest intimate interactions between mother and child, trying to re-build emotional bonds with affection.

Says Mintz: “Many children who are traumatized will have missed this nurture, which is an important part of growing up. Without it, they have no history of a truthful and loving relationship with an adult. That makes them unwilling to form social bonds, and they become emotionally insecure.”

This method involves treating older children as though they were much younger, and giving them complete attention and affection in guided, hour-long sessions. It usually involves a lot of games with massages, a non-threatening way of encouraging healthy physical contact. The sessions usually involve fun games and storytelling where the therapist begins a story and the child ends it.

Many of the abused children feel threatened by any kind of physical contact. In such cases, the therapist invites the child to touch them first, and maybe use objects like feathers instead of direct contact. At Chora Chori, the therapy method was applied to 15 children, including children rescued from Muzzafarpur and other victims of sexual abuse.

The goal is for the children to be able to establish healthy, nurturing relationships with people. Through this therapy is often used for children with trauma, especially in case of adoption, it is now increasingly used on the elderly.

“A child who has been denied healthy relationships, bonds with the therapist. They need love, care, and trust, without which they cannot function as healthy adults,” Mintz explains.

Since privacy is critical in therapy, its intimate nature also raises concerns about higher risk of child abuse. But Mintz believes it is no different from any other therapy session where you leave the therapist and child alone in a room, and trust is key.

It is too early to say whether this approach will help the rescued children grow up to be emotionally secure adults, but for now Shalini Rajbandari says it has worked wonders with children at Chora Chori.

She adds: “Many of the children came up with stories about their own past after a single session, some talked of abuses while some recalled being forced to work. After the therapy, it was much easier to communicate with children who had been defensive or exclusively introverted before.”

Some 380 cases of human trafficking are reported to the police every year, but child welfare workers believe the number is much higher. An estimate by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) estimates that every year 23,000 Nepalis become victims of trafficking, and half of them are children.

Some end up being taken across the border to India where police regularly round up unaccompanied children from railway stations and the streets and hand them over to shelters like the one in Muzzafarpur that was raided.

Says Shalini CM: “Conditions of many children’s homes in India are deplorable. Not only are many of them lacking in basic facilities, abuse is also rampant.”

Sewa Bhattachary
Sewa Bhattarai

Traffic policeman goes live on Facebook from the balcony of his Kathmandu home from where the snowy mountains used to be visible. He cannot even see Swayambhunath because of the smog. His daughter gets a coughing fit, and the camera is abruptly turned off.

The policeman is reprimanded for embarrassing the government, and asked to delete the video. Instead, he resurfaces and files a writ petition demanding better pollution protection for traffic police. This is how the second episode of the teleserial Singha Durbar - 2 starts.

The second season of Singha Durbar is like fantasy land: Nepal has a female prime minister who is not into wheeling-dealing and crookery, but grapples with health and environmental issues. We keep being reminded rudely of reality as Prime Minister Asha Singh struggles to keep her coalition together while vested interest groups try to wreck her plans to solve air pollution.

She pushes through a bill forcing auto dealers to also import electric vehicles, asks the Ministry of Environment to come up with an action plan to clean up Kathmandu’s filthy air, and provides traffic police with industrial grade masks. She even goes back to the fired traffic policeman her job.

Real life politicians in Singha Durbar are doing something Nepal’s real life elected governments stubbornly refuse to do: protect the health of citizens. Viewers on tv and YouTube can learn how a government should function while being entertained—this is infotainment with a powerful contemporary message.

As in American tv dramas West Wing or Veep, Singha Durbar recreates the confusions of power, while employing social themes often ignored by Nepal’s politicians today. This is not comedy, nor is it an action thriller that makes you wait for every episode with bated breath, it is a sober and slow-moving drama.

However, one wonders if the plot grabs Nepali audiences more used to sensational fare on tv and the Net. But that is the whole point for director Nabin Shabba, of Namasundari fame: “Our politics today has not been able to address the ordinary people’s concerns, whether it is air pollution, roads, or health. We are trying to show what is possible, something to be inspired by. How can Nepal achieve good governance? If leaders and government put people first, it can be done.”

Gurum Malla, who plays Prime Minister Singh, says it may take another decade or so for Nepal to have a female prime minister, and adds that the serial is not trying to portray reality, but the aspirations of the people regarding politics.

“What would I want my prime minister to be like? I want her to be able, wise, charismatic, and want her to prioritise the people above everything. That is how I approach the PM’s on-screen persona.” Malla told us while on the sets of a forthcoming episode this week.

Prime Minister Singh is a civilised, soft spoken, almost demure character—far cry from the chest-thumping all-male who play the real Singha Durbar. Singh succeeds in finding solutions to knotty national crises like air pollution, food security, education, unemployment through behind-the-scenes lobbying. She even gets the Health Bill passed—something Govinda KC has not been able to do in the actual Nepal.

Singha Durbar daren to dream of a democratic Nepal where leaders are answerable to the people and who believe in service and performance. Singh has to fight to keep her coalition intact, and in doing so proves that clinging to power can have a positive constitution when there is a mission to be accomplished.

The production (banded by USAID, UNDP and the Nepali diaspora) is unabashedly idealistic, but Singh is not averse to playing a few political games herself, haranguing her and compromising them. Her negotiation style is decent, however, and tame compared to the dog-eat-dog ways of her rivals. Nothing seems to corrupt Singh; when someone tells her that the party is greater than the individual, she replies that the country is greater than the party. Applause.

The script, cast and storylines all portray an inclusive Nepal. The Prime Minister’s personal secretary is a Tharu, a Muslim woman is Speaker of Parliament. Madhesi leaders are Singh’s staunchest supporters, a Nepali minister is the voice of her conscience, and the Health Minister is a scientist who refuses funding from a pharmaceutical company.

Despite its socialistic storyline, Singha Durbar had an audience of 6.67 million in the first season and was the fifth most watched tv show. Producer Pradip Gautam Iqbal says the reason for the success is that it is provocative positive: “There is widespread negativity and disillusionment towards us and we are trying to show there are other ways to do politics.”

The other reason for its popularity is the series’ meticulous production values, the cast shines with excellent acting and direction. Compared to the last season, the plot is even more realistic and delves into the background of the characters. At Bulwara, the prime minister herself grapples with issues that many working women face: the need to care for her family despite her hectic schedule, the overt vanity of a less famous husband whom she calls ‘sim’ and sometimes cooks for.

By the end of Episode 3, Prime Minister Singh brings together the leaders of South Asian countries to collectively pressure Gulf nations to treat migrant workers better. "The message: nothing is impossible in actual day-to-day politics. More than the Nepali public, this is a must-see for the current political leadership."

Fictional female prime minister tackles air pollution in teleserial

A reel prime minister
Nepali scientist returns to pinpoint health hazards of dirty air

Even while in Buchanan-Thusa School, Gurung already knew she wanted to study environment science, even though many tried to dissuade her saying she should veer into a better paying profession.

She went on to the University of Colorado in Denver, and then to a PhD at Yale University. Gurung has spent the last 12 years collecting air samples high in Rocky Mountains to determine the impact of nitrogen deposition on forest growth, specialising in Geographic Information Science (GIS), investigated the link between climate change and malaria in Tanzania, and travelled across Asia to study pollution exposure.

Her passion to investigate the correlation between air pollution and public health has brought her back to a full circle to Kathmandu, where particulate concentration in the air in winter is ten times higher than the WHO standard, and asbad as Beijing and Delhi.

Everyone knows dirty air is bad for health, but Gurung’s research tries to pinpoint where and where it is most hazardous. For this, she correlates hospital admission records with average daily pollution levels.

Back in 2007, she conducted PM2.5 (concentration of particles below 2.5 microns in diameter) exposure analysis by location, occupation and proximity to roadways. She found traffic police to have maximum exposure during morning rush hour. Shopkeepers with sidewalk stores were subjected to pollutants at least three times higher than people working away from the main streets.

Air quality measurements in itself doesn’t mean anything, but when communicated with its impact on health, the data is so compelling that people are more ready to take action for its mitigation, explains Gurung, whose goal is to make public awareness lead to policy reform and better regulation.

One of Gurung’s research in Kathmandu involved collecting patient records from six city hospitals and comparing it with a data base of air quality from 2002 to 2007, drawing a direct correlation between hospital admissions and air pollution.

She found that every 10ug/m3 increase in the concentration of particles smaller than 10 microns elevated admissions for cardiovascular ailments by nearly 2.3%—a higher rate than in any other part of the world. Risks in respiratory admissions was comparatively lower at 1.6%.

“This was a clear indication that we in Nepal are more susceptible to cardiovascular diseases due to pollution,” says 35-year-old Gurung, who just completed her postdoctoral research with the University of Texas in Austin. She used mobile monitoring of nitrogen dioxide (NO2) as a technique to reliably map patterns of air pollution to understand how nearby sources affect concentrations. She found that the presence of busy roads, built-up areas and industrial zones elevated (NO2) concentrations.

There is now greater public awareness about the health risks of air pollution, but this has not triggered individual action mainly because people lack cleaner alternatives. There has also been little state response, with the Municipality and Environment Ministry slow to enforce existing vehicular emission laws. There are reports of people moving away from areas with high levels of pollution, leading to a fall in rental rates.

Gurung is in Kathmandu this time to conduct a workshop designed to use open air pollution data to push public awareness and evidence-based policy making.

In a research paper last year that she co-authored, Gurung concluded that road expansion in Kathmandu had led to more cars, more congestion and more pollution. She wrote: ‘Today, non-motorised road users are more unsafe on the roads than ever before.

She advocates abandoning car-centric urban development, encouraging an efficient and reliable public transport network, bicycle lanes, pedestrian sidewalks and electric vehicles.

Says Gurung: “Individually, we can choose to use a public bus instead of a car, use more efficient public transport and waste management. Small-scale activities at community level can help control air pollution and if this is pushed by government support we can definitely have better air quality.”

FOR A CLEANER KATHMANDU

Go online to watch interview with climate scientist Anobha Gurung in which she explains why she has come back to work in Nepal, and about her passion to make Kathmandu air healthier to breathe.

times.com
Health Transformed by Art
A community arts project bringing out the untapped therapeutic value of visual art in a hospital setting, providing psychological relief to patients, hospital staff, and general public. The exhibition marks the completion of the pilot project and displays the progress and moments captured during the project. 17-19 August, 11am-9pm, Southall Art Gallery, Elder Avenue, London, E10 1GT. 020 8158 1948

Games evening
Friday night means grabbing a drink, a some fun and games, join in for a wide range of games in different categories; family, strategy, role playing and talk. 17 August, 5.30-7.30pm; Alliance Française Kathmandu, Pashupati, (01) 5050517

Teeg Saree Mahotsav
Collection includes sarees from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Nepali handmade bhuttah sheela and designer dresses, Japanese kimono set and unique Barkailur collection. 17-18 August, 11am-9pm, Old Fashioned Embossure House, Narayani 3440881116

Slave To The Grind
A documentary on a micro genre Grindcore capturing its truest form. Take you to Japan, the UK, the USA, Singapore, Finland and Sweden to discuss why the genre has persisted and changed over time. Purple Heart and Underground Roasters are screening it for free. 18 August, 5.45pm, The Purple Heart Rock Bar, Thamel. sarojdeeg@gmail.com

RoofTop garden
Register by 22 August for a two-day training to become an expert in organic waste management and roof top gardens, based on the practical demonstration and field visit. 23-24 August, 11am onwards, Global Peace Foundation Nepal, Dilbazar (height 1660m). (01) 4860421/486004

Salim Rai and the Pharaoh
Join Salim Rai and the Pharaoh sitting on the river for a rubber rafting experience with Parwanipur 18 August, 4-10pm, Reggae Bar, Thamel. (01) 4860075

Kanta Dab Bab
A story band with Utah, percussion and banjo playing some contemporary and fusion compositions on the 12th anniversary of Kanta Lounge and Bar. 18 August, 7.30pm, Dab Lounge and Bar, (01) 4861075

Evoke Café & Bistro
The cafe and bistro is your doorway into a space, where globalileo. smells, stories, sounds and shapes of your mind’s world. Pick your favourite: pita bread, baguette and multigrain as bread sandwiches all served with homemade fries and salads on taste. 18 August, 11.00am to 11.00pm, (01) 4771001

Air and Beer Wings
Buffalo wings, chicken wings, yelpin wings, honey beer wings, sweet and sour wings, fried wings, buffalo style wings or ghee chicken wings. Upper your pick at the hotel’s food prematu. 17-20 August, 11am-11pm, Parkin Hotel, Boudha and Tea, Ground Floor, Bagmati, Kirtipur, Kirtipur, (01) 4289999 ext. 2603

Magic of moom
Indulge in an array of mouth-watering mooms available in various flavors and sizes with 15-spicing condiments. 17 August 16th September, 3-7pm, Laby Lodge, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, Boudha, (01) 5174524

Tea-Mex
Savor a hosted on an authentic fusion Mexican Cafe featuring traditional Mexican food with a healthy twist, prepared by the hosts’ chef. 17 August, 7-10pm, Sohpie’s Crown Palace, Thakali, (01) 4247889

Durbar Restaurant
Get the feel of royalty while dining at the multi cuisine restaurant which is a reminiscent of ancient palaces. Warmth and hospitality can bring you to the palace. 6am-10pm, Gokarna Forest Resort, Thali, (01) 4857572

Le Sherpa
With a focus on seasonal and local vegetables and fruits, sometimes grown in the same premises and offering a taste from the local produce, t Le Sherpa comes up with a delightful menu every season. Come here for healthy and fresh dining. Marsyangdi, (01) 486004

Air Quality Index
KATHMANDU, 10 - 16 August

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<th>Day</th>
<th>AQI</th>
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The daily average for the concentration of PM2.5 particles is below 1.15 microns in diameter this week in the Kathmandu Valley. This is a good news for health-conscious individuals and the environment. It’s the result of improved air quality, reduced industrial activities, and increased public awareness. However, it’s essential to continue efforts to maintain and improve air quality for long-term health benefits.

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Bharat Shumsher, a brother's tribute

Sagar Rana

Bharat Shumsher was born at Singha Durbar 85 years ago as the first great grandson of Prime Minister Chandi Shumsher Rana. The birth of this future warrior for democracy was celebrated by Nepal's absolutist rulers as a day of national rejoicing. When, in 1929, Chandra died and the family moved to Baber Mahal, Bharat was still a toddler. He grew up in the palace, but the luxuries of most of the Rana households were curtailed by Baber Shumsher. He believed in austerity and a disciplined life style. 'Leadership' came naturally to Bharat, and he was the dominating figure among his two sisters and four brothers—one of them me. Somehow, 'rebellion' was instilled early in him against the on-going social mores and lifestyle, including religious sites. There was a small shrine of Shikshen in the palace grounds venerated by all. Bharat used to hurl objects at it, saying if this be Bhimesh, I am Arjan.

Bharat's father Mrigendra strived to ensure the best possible education to his children. Bharat was admitted to St Xavier's College, Bombay. Under a professor who was a self-learning artist, the angry young man of Baber Mahal turned into an eternal rebel. Bharat's letter of commitment to BP Koirala's call in 1946 for a united force of Nepalis to bring down the Rana regime, was the natural reaction of a rebel. Circumstances altered this course and he returned to Kathmandu with excellent grades in BA Honours. Prime Minister Mohan quickly persuaded him to join the government as Minister of Agriculture. He served in that capacity, not with great enthusiasm, until the day of the fall of Rana oligarchy for Bharat, the fall was not the end but beginning of his illustrious political career. In 1952-53 he joined and then inspired the Gorkha Dal.

In the 1948 general elections, the NC led by stalwarts such as BP Koirala, Sunita Shumsher, Ganga Singh and KP Blattrai, won over 74 seats in Parliament. The Gorkha Dal secured 15 seats.

When Chinese troops intruded into Nepal's territory in Mustang, fired on an unarmed police sub-post killing one officer, BP shared the concern with Bharat outside of Government and evolved a common strategy that led China to accept the mistake and pay a token compensation of $50,000. Bharat stayed firmly by the side of BP Koirala when King Mahendra dismissed the duly elected government through the military backed coup in December 1960. Arrested and jailed along with leaders of NC, he contrived to get released after about six months, and then, as was his plan, slipped away to India.

In September 1961 he issued a public statement through Gorkha Parishad into NC, to wage a common fight to restore democracy in Nepal. He was co-opted by Sunita Shumsher the acting Chairman into the 'High Command' of NC. By the absence of BP, Bharat always supported and led the wing within NC that opted for armed struggle against the King, as opposed to Suman's conciliatory approach. When BP entered Nepal in December 1976, making conviction for treason and capital punishment, Bharat followed in 1980.

In May 1977 King Birendra announced a referendum to decide between a multiparty democracy or 'reformed' Panchayat. The latter prevailed, with backing of the government and alleged large scale manipulation. BP felt that even in defeat, the door for canvassing and meetings with the people was now open and opted to accept the verdict of the referendum. Bharat was convinced BP was right, and continued to actively support the party.

BP's death in July 1982 was followed by a smooth transition of power from Ganga to Gyanendra as the Supreme commander and BP Bhanu continuing as Anleer into the high party. Bharat was close to Gyanendra personally admired his courage and grit, but found a great void in the intellectual content and commitment to the 'social revolution', that he shared with BP. He continued to visit Kathmandu after the ratification of the new constitution. He died on July 27, 2003, due to an unscheduled illness.

Manjubabu Mishra, 83

Manjubabu Mishra had lived the second half of his life in almost complete isolation, not going outside his body home on the outskirts of Kathmandu. His studio, crammed with books and painting equipment, suited his lifestyle and personality. His large writing desk was lined with containers, each holding tools of an unimaginable variety: hammer, wrenches, screwdrivers, scissors, brushes. He was skilled with his hands, and made his own bamboo pens, an improvised water jet to dip from, and even crafted his own chairs, benches and easels when younger.

Before advancing age and ill health forced him indoors, Mishra lived a hermit’s life in an outhouse while his family lived nearby. The fiercely self-sufficient artist, who preferred expression to aesthetics, passed his days in his studio, age 90, 5 August 95 in his home, tridents and rockets amidst tumultuous multi-colored clouds swirling over transcendental forms.

Mishra was known for a trademark grotesque style whose own face is seen in distorted forms, often accompanied by skulls and rockets amidst tumultuous multi-colored clouds swirling over transcendental forms.

This is the symbol of power, of creation and destruction, which to him symbolised eastern philosophy. The horns are often seen growing out of his own self-portraits, and are emblematic of the beast in the man. He often bemoaned that modernity seemed to isolate people even further from each other.

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Return to nature

From using leaf planes called papi, and melon leaves or hura as shampoo, to mixing bottles and containers in the kitchen, Nepal’s practices have been sustainability for years. But modern lifestyles have eroded these practices. In order to revive these practices and make them a part of our daily lives, happening in Kathmandu this weekend is an attempt to turn the culturally embedded habits of Nepal into an industrial movement.

“In the last few years we have encouraged organisations, businesses and individuals to take a more ethical and eco-conscious route. There is still a long way to go, but we want to showcase what we have accomplished so far,” says co-organiser Tika Shrestha, who manages the online site Where N Weer.

Dilseas teamed with Jovina Kedia, who has also worked in marketing various fashion brands and designers in India. The all-day event on 18 August includes:

12pm: Creative installations
Monish Shrestha’s studio will showcase the theme of sustainability.

1pm: Panel discussion
Journalist Bijay Ruit, Knos Cotton founder Shyam Babu Shrestha, director of Government School of Arts and Craft School, will talk about sustainability.

3pm: Panel discussion
TV presenter Supraj Shrestha, Sabah Nepal’s designer Lari Bajracharya, sustainable designer Addi Mayer, designer May Jutabua, entreprenue Sunita Karki, President Shrestha and fashion designer Thia Pushkar will discuss sustainability in fashion.

4pm: Standup comedy
Shrikranta Banerji, a bilingual comedian, will perform a routine that ranges from feminism to current politics and the contrasts of “first world” and “third world”. Use musical performance follows.

Up-cycling station
Carry a white T-shirt, a black round-neck T-shirt, denim jacket, and jeans, slippers and any other baring and plain clothing you have. The up-cycling booth is there to add a touch of elegance or funk.

Do It Yourself
A class for experts on planting and upcycling using plastic waste. La Salle patisserie and boulangerie will assist in making toppings to the newest dessert in town – cake pops.

Sustainable brands booth
More than 15 Nepali brands producing sustainable products, from lifestyle and clothing to recycled yarns, food, drinks and soaps that focus on empowerment, environment, and ethics. Also introducing the new idea of swapping clothes: namaste a like-minded person and swap anything with him or her every three months.

2.15pm: Short film screening
The Rise of Sustainability by Joshie Cachajee explores how the concept has gone from the fringes to the mainstream within just a few decades. It explores the origins of the Anthropocene and the requirement of key economic transformations to achieve sustainability in the age of globalization.

CONSTITUTION ABOVE ALL: Prime Minister KP Oli at the concluding ceremony of the international conference on the Nepal Constitution in Kathmandu on Sunday marking three years of its promulgation.

FRIENDLY ROUTES: Indian Ambassador Marjeen Singh Puri handed over Rs470 million for the Padal Highway project to Minister of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Pushpendra Adhikari, at Singh Durbar on Tuesday.

HOWZAT: President Bidhya Bhandari poses with Nepal’s National Cricket Team in Kathmandu on Tuesday. The team registered its first One Day International win earlier this month against the Netherlands at Amsterdam.

FOLLOWUP: Prime Minister KP Oli and Govinda KC during a meeting in Baluwatar on Saturday, where the two discussed the implementation of the recent nine-point agreement on medical education reform.

SLURP: Milkshake lovers throng the different outlets of Sweets in Budhadev Mithai, inaugurated last week. The famous Darjeeling dairy partner also has outlets in Laban Mall, Gai Mall and Thamel.
Taxman cometh

Naya Patrika, 16 August

New local government taxes have generated outrage over the rates and for hurting those with minimum wage occupations. Here are some items that have raised protests:

- **Tax on proving you are alive**
  People assumed to be dead AND found alive will have to pay back taxes to the municipality. Local administrations in East and West Rukum have imposed taxes on documents to prove that someone is still alive. Sinne village, the fee is Rs200 for the service. Kumari Band of the village council of Sinne said: “Yes, if a person comes back to life, there is a tax on the document.”

- **Tax on proving you are poor**
  People have to pay a Rs50 tax to prove their low economic status in Alhishtook municipality in Rukum. The local government has levied taxes just for marriage registration, but also to prove whether one is married or single, which costs Rs1,000 in Alhishtook and Chauraha municipalities, and Rs200 in Sinne for the service.

- **Tax on roasting corn and selling buffalo**
  Tiltums municipality in Rupandehi has started collecting Rs15 from corn vendors at marketplaces. Ducks, chicken, and pigeons are taxed Rs13 apiece. Vegetable retailers used to pay Rs1,200, and fruit sellers with wheelbarrows, Rs1,500 per year. In Tripurasundari municipality of Dolakha, farmers need to pay a Rs1,000 tax if they sell a buffalo and Rs450 if they sell a goat.

- **Vegetable vendors are not spared**
  Siddharthi municipality of Rupandehi has not only imposed a tax of Rs2,000 on vegetable retailers, but also started collecting Rs35 from farmers who take vegetables and green to the market in dolas. Butub village municipality also collects Rs20 per trip.

- **Tax on fishing**
  Yangwas village of Panchthar is preparing to tax people for fishing in the district’s rivers. Village council head Lekhnath Ghimire said that the money was needed to protect natural resources. The council is preparing to give the responsibility of collecting the taxes to local contractors, at a minimum of Rs150,000.

- **Rs20 per day from sidewalk barbers**
  In Butwal sub-municipality of Morang, barbers have to pay Rs20, charge customer selling Rs30, mohindar applies Rs10, and magicians Rs20 every day. In Kathmandu village, tax sellers have to pay Rs1,100 per year.

- **Rs20 per month ‘garbage tax’**
  Butwal sub-municipality of Morang is collecting garbage tax not just from landlords but also from tenants. The municipality used to collect Rs100 per house, but is now collecting Rs50 per family. There is a discount for students.

- **Rs1,000 to declared burglar**
  Hiratnagar metropolitan wants Rs1,000 to provide documents confirming the closure of a business.

- **Rs1,000 per day to shoot a movie**
  Bandipur village of Tanahun has imposed a tax of Rs1,000 per day for film and music video shootings. There is also a drone tax of Rs500, and a paraglider tax of Rs1,500.

- **NRS 500 for translating documents**
  Mysung municipality of Tehrathum has imposed a tax of Rs500 on any document to be made in English. There are also taxes of Rs600 for divorce, Rs1,000 for tax recommendation for citizenship, Rs200 for verification, Rs200 for copies of documents, Rs1,000 for naturalised citizenship, Rs500 for recommendation for health insurance. The municipality aims to collect Rs6.5 million in the current fiscal year from such taxes.

- **Rs200 tax for chopping trees in your own land**
  Lunkum village of Panchthar has imposed a tax of Rs200 for cutting trees in private property. Village council chief Kamal Bhattacharri said the tax was to discourage people from deforestation. Rs400,000 was collected last year just from this.

- **Rs1,000 for200 tax for collecting Rs50 per litre of diesel and petrol as ‘pollution tax’**
  and collects Rs5.5 million per year from two petrol pumps in the municipality.

- **Rs1,000 for cordon cars**
  In Makalu village of Morang, shops that operate cordon cars will have to pay Rs1,000 a year in tax. Gauchan village has a tax of Rs500 per day on goat and pig butchers, and Rs500 for chicken vendors.

Secularism makes society immoral and corrupt. Religious communities do not have a voice. Religious leaders are not allowed to speak. The actions or laws of the government cannot be challenged on the basis of religion or religious texts. You converted to Christianity during your school days. But you found yourself feeling like a ‘dishonoured Hindu’. Is it old age? I’m still a Christian and my only faith is in Jesus Christ. Three years ago I started thinking seriously about our country, and I figured out that the only things which give Nepal its identity are the founding Alhiya Dynasty, the Nepal Army and Hinduism. If we are to save this country and if future generations are to live as Nepalis (in Nepal), we have to reiterate the monarchy and give up secularism. And the Nepal Army should help achieve this.

You were a Mason, and now you want the monarchy back? Yes, I do. The secularisation agenda was pushed by western countries and I opposed it on their agents in the past. But I am contesting now, I did it without understanding. It is not impossible to bring back the Hindu monarchy. Nothing is impossible in this world, especially for people who have faith, like us.

Are you saying we need a referendum? No, we cannot have a referendum, how can you put Nepal’s basic identity to vote?

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Nepal’s suffragette

Activists are up in arms against the new Citizenship Bill that they say entrenches patriarchy

S
evven seven years after the Supreme Court issued a landmark verdict in the Sabina Damai vs Government of Nepal case, allowing children to obtain citizenship in the name of the mother alone, the 2015 Constitution and a draft bill in Parliament have set the clock back. Activists say the 2015 Constitution which was drafted, debated and promulgated mainly by men, denies equal citizenship rights to women, and the draft bill further entrenches Nepal’s patriarchal culture. The three main objectionable provisions are:

a) A foreign woman married to a Nepali man can get naturalised citizenship right away, and is given six months to furnish proof that she has renounced her original citizenship. But if a foreign man marries a Nepali woman, he will not get Nepali citizenship. He can apply for naturalised citizenship after residing in Nepal continuously for 15 years. But his marriage to a Nepali woman will not count, and he has to apply for naturalised citizenship just like any other foreigner.

b) Children of a Nepali man married to a foreign woman are entitled to citizenship by descent. But the children of a Nepali woman married to a foreign man will get naturalised citizenship, and that too only after producing proof they aren’t already citizens of their father’s country. They can get citizenship by descent only if the father has naturalised Nepali citizenship.

c) Children above 14 can easily get citizenship if their fathers are Nepali, but it is much more difficult if they only have their mother’s citizenship. If the father is unknown, is estranged, or refuse to accept them, their mother will have to “decline” to authorities that she does not know who the father of the child is.

“The constitution and the citizenship bill perpetrate the male notion that men are superior, and women are not equal to men,” says former Supreme Court Justice Bimal KC. KC was one of two justices who ordered the Dolakha district administration in 2011 to grant citizenship to Sabina Damai through her mother’s name. Sabina’s father was not known, and Dolakha Chief District Officer had refused to grant her citizenship unless her father’s identity was established.

The Supreme Court not only directed the Dolakha administration to grant Sabina citizenship without asking about her father, it also ruled that women would henceforth be able to pass on citizenship to their children even without their husbands.

“Plural verdict was not just for Sabina Damai, but for every person whose father is unknown and who wants citizenship through his or her mother’s name,” KC says. Barring a few exceptions, male-dominated district administration offices have deferred the precedent set by Damai vs GoN and continue to deny citizenship to offspring of single mothers.

In 2013, Shanti Nagarkoti filed a petition at Supreme Court after his son denied citizenship by the Kathmandu district administration unless

All political parties are technically

In May, the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) faced a dilemma. The Election Commission (EC) was throwing the book at the ruling party for not meeting the constitutional requirement to have women make up at least one-third of its executive committees.

Made up after the union of the UML with the Maoists, NCP had just 16% women in its 441-member Central Working Committee. And it did not have a single woman in its nine-member top executive body. The EC refused to register the NCP, asking the party to first reserve 33% seats for women. Women leaders within the NCP also urged Prime Minister Oli, and NCP Chair, to induct more women into the executive committee.

However, sources told Nepal Times that instead of meeting the constitutional requirement senior party cadre tried to intimidate and threaten Election Commission members.

Oli and his acolytes argued that the executive committees of the UML and the Maoists were elected before the Political Party Registration Act 2017, and therefore would not have to abide by the one-third women rule. Election Commissioners who did not agree were threatened with being framed for corruption.

In a face-saving measure, the EC asked all political parties to ensure 33% women in their executive committees within 30 days. The deadline expired last month, but no party has yet

Infected more women into their executive committees. They have just informed the EC that they will do so when they hold their General Conventions.

MP Binda Pandey says: “In a way, all political parties have now already lost their legitimacy because they have not abided by the law even in the 30-day grace period given by the EC.”

Within his own party, Oli shut
she provided her father’s name. Two years later, the Supreme Court ordered the Kathmandu administration to grant her citizenship despite her father being unknown.

Thanks to the judiciary, a handful of other mothers have been successful in getting citizenship for their children in their own name, but it is not yet the norm. Only the most determined mothers and those willing to fight a long legal battle have managed to get Nepali citizenship for their children.

When the Constituent Assembly passed the new Constitution in September 2015, fewer than 30% of the 601 member House were female, and none of them were in decisive positions. Their voices were easily suppressed by a cartel of male leaders from the hill upper caste community.

As a result, the Constitution, which is progressive in many ways, embarrasses even its staunchest supporters. Former top United Nations official Kailash Satyarthi has always defended the statute, but he too believes it discriminates against women.

At a conference on Nepal’s citizenship in Kathmandu this week, he admitted that gender discrimination in citizenship is the only fatal flaw in the charter.

The Parliament is unlikely to amend the Constitution and the draft Citizenship Bill to grant equal rights to women. When women MPs demanded equal citizenship rights in the Parliament this week, Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa fell back on the nationalist argument that citizenship was a matter of national security.

Nepal’s main parties have always held the view that granting equal citizenship to women will encourage more foreign men, especially Indians, to marry Nepali women. They have spread the fear that Nepal will become “another Fiji”, where Melanesians were outnumbered by descendants of migrants from India due to a liberal citizenship law.

Kritika Bhakta Pokhrel, a ruling party MP who was a member of the Constitution drafting committee, says: “Our constitution is shaped by the idea that women go to live in their husband’s homes after marriage, and not vice versa. This is the reality, and we cannot ignore it while drafting the citizenship law.”

NCP MP Hindu Pandey says the citizenship provisions in the Constitution do not violate international treaties to which Nepal is signatory, but also contradicts the statute’s guiding principles and election manifestos of all political parties.

The Constitution stipulates that a person whose father or father’s mother is a Nepali citizen at birth is entitled to citizenship, but this provision is rendered ineffective by other clauses that bar citizenship for offering of Nepali women married to foreign men.

“All Nepali citizens should be able to pass on citizenship to their children irrespective of their gender,” he says. “It should be as simple as this. Why do we pretend to grant equal citizenship rights through one clause, only to take it back by enacting many other clauses?”

Women have slammed discriminatory citizenship provisions by writing articles and speaking out in public. Some have added, Dorje Dorji (Second Class) before their names on their Twitter handles. As Election Commissioner Bishnu Shrestha says: “This is my way of non-violently protesting against a patriarchal state that wants to treat us as unequal citizens.”

The way the NCP and other parties tried to bamboozle the EC doesn’t prove the level of impunity and the erosion of the rule of law, but also indicates just how entrenched patriarchy is in the political leadership.

Given this, it is not surprising that they are trying to push a discriminatory Citizenship Bill that would make Nepali women second-class citizens.

Ex Supreme Court Justice Bipan KC, who delivered a landmark verdict on the Sabina Danau vs Government of Nepal case (see main story, above), says the Constitution and the law have not overtly denied citizenship rights to women, but there are many cunningly ambiguous clauses that can be manipulated by the authorities to humiliate, harass or even exploit single women seeking citizenship for their children.

Says KC: “Since most authorities are steeped in patriarchy, they deliberately misread and misinterpret ambiguous clauses just like how political parties have manipulated the Political Party Act.”

Om Astha Rai
The donkey has to think twice before braying, since as of today (17th of August in the 2,019th year of our lord) he can be hauled over the coals for poking fun at the local government trying to turn Nepal into a Tax Heaven.

Local elected officials have learned well from national leaders who have become experts at spreading the wealth around by using tax payer money to finance brain transplants in Singapore, because they don’t trust donor brains available in Nepal.

Already, local governments have announced bullock cart taxes with separate annual fees for both bullocks, as well as a road cess for the cart. Bicycles will be taxed in Province 2, and Province 4 has announced a special tax for crossing rivers.

Chicken, goats, ducks, buffalos, and other sacrificial animals will henceforth have to pay a retrospective tax after they are ritually decapitated. And there is a hair cut tax in Province 6. (Editor’s Note: None of the taxable items up to this point are made up. See page 13.)

However, it saddens the Ass to see that local governments are forcing much dinero by not being imaginative enough to widen the tax bracket. And with due permission from the Board of Seniors, here are some bright new ideas:

1. **Facebook Tax**: 8 million Nepalis are on Facebook, and the country is losing billions in revenue to Senor Zuckerberg, which should rightfully stay in the country. FB users will henceforth be taxed hourly, and for posting five albums of holidays in Thailand.

2. **Loop Tax**: Districts declared Open Defecation Free will tax all dumpsites great and small. Urinals and arsenals throughout the land will henceforth need to be registered.

3. **Corruption Tax**: All bribes, kickbacks, commissions, cuts, backsheds, bush money, will henceforth come under the tax umbrella. Bribes for all bribes between Rs 1 Crore and Rs 10 Arase. In order to avoid double taxation, extortion amounts above Rs 1 Khubco on FB will be tax deductible.

4. **Laughter Tax**: To show it is serious about taxes, the government has instituted a new Levity Levy. Anyone found guffawing, chuckling, giggling, or even snorting while reading this column will be taxed an amount calculated on the basis of duration and intensity of mirth. Said amount will be automatically deducted from reader’s safety deposit box. Who is laughing now?

5. **Death Tax**: All Nepalis will have to posthumously pay a death tax to the state at the successful completion of their current lives. Future reincarnations will be taxed on a post-paid basis.

Let us bray.