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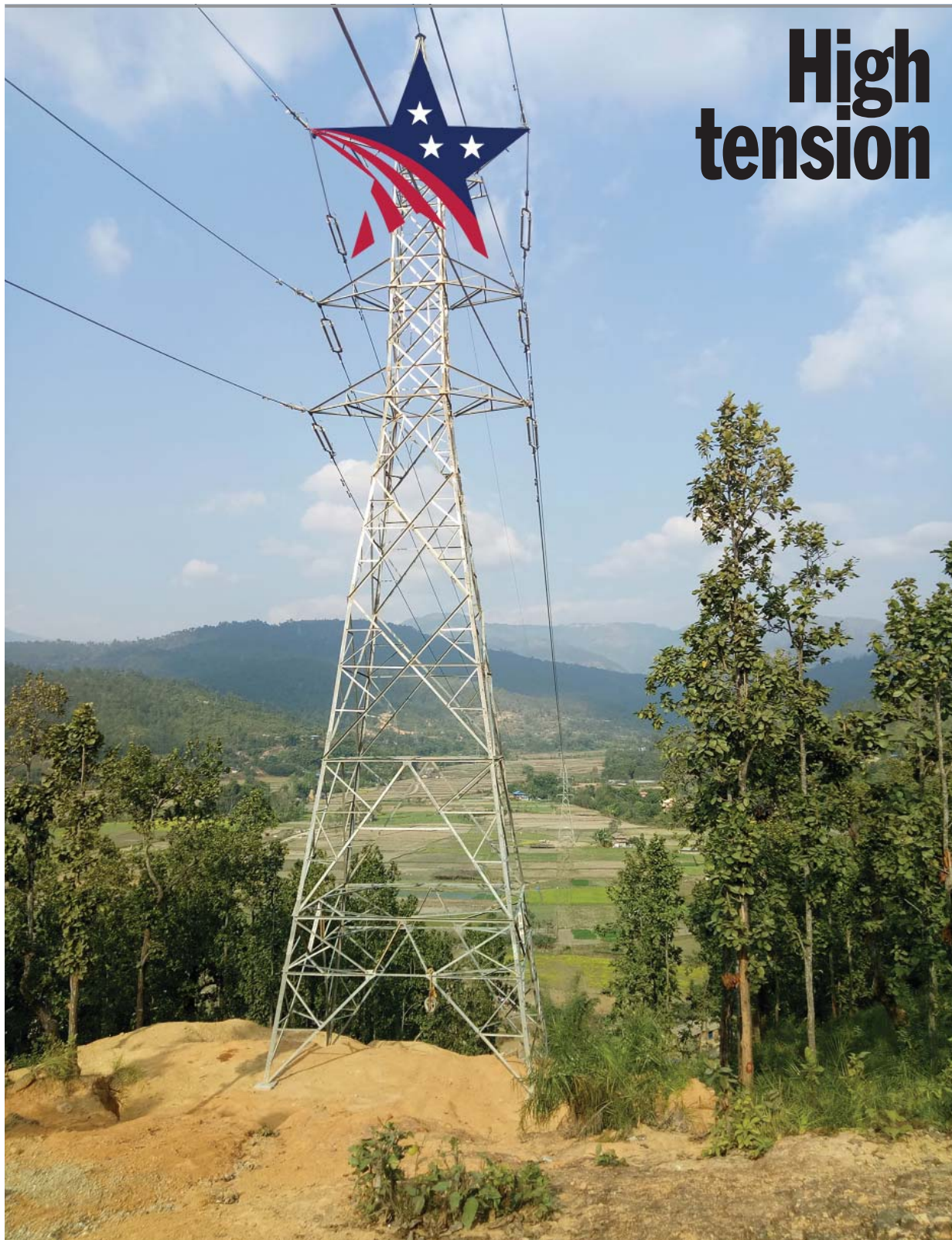


PHOTO MONTAGE / NEPAL ENERGY FORUM

● Rabin Giri

A House session Wednesday to debate the MCC was postponed again as Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the Maoists seemingly reneged on a deal he had with Prime Minister Deuba after getting him to agree on an impeachment motion against Chief Justice Cholendra SJB Rana.

The 28 February deadline to approve the American-funded Millennium Challenge Corporation project is looming, but the ruling coalition is now on the verge of a split if Deuba convinces the UML's

K P Oli to back him to ratify the project on Friday.

Oli may be willing, but Deuba is wary of his prime ministerial ambitions and possible electoral realignment with the Maoists. Dahal and Madhav Kumar Nepal of the Unified Socialists labeled the MCC as 'anti-national' to such an extent to topple Oli that they cannot now retract their words for fear of an electoral backlash.

Dahal already landed in hot water two weeks ago after a letter to the MCC he co-signed was leaked, exposing his duplicity.

Neither the Maoist Centre nor the Unified Socialists have

strong local bases, since both are breakaway parties. Prime Minister Deuba for his part wants to have his cake and eat it too -- keep the coalition intact and pass the MCC. The time may have come for him to choose between the two.

Deuba knows that rejecting the MCC would impact on future aid, trade and development partnerships, and lead to international ostracisation. Sri Lanka rejected its own \$480 million MCC two years ago, and is now ensnared in debt (*Editorial, page 2*).

If the 5-year project had gone ahead, Nepal's transmission lines would have been built by now and

NEA would be able to distribute electricity from new plants. Those projects were developed with Rs215 billion in investment from banks, which used deposits of ordinary Nepali citizens.

As banker Anil Shah argues (*page 6-7*) the financial sector will be in deep trouble if the private power producers go belly-up. Nepal will then have to knock on World Bank and ADB doors for loans, but the international lenders will be reluctant if Nepal rejects the MCC.

There is no party or politician to be singled out for this unholy mess. The UML rallied behind the MCC while in government, only to try to use it now to bring down the coalition. The two Communist parties in the ruling alliance are hoping Deuba and Oli will be punished by voters on 13 May for their pro-MCC stance.

All this has given the opportunity for self-proclaimed nationalists of the left and right to spread disinformation about how the US is turning Nepal into a military outpost.

A generation that grew up reading literature about 'American imperialism and Indian expansionism' is now in the leadership of the Communist parties.

The populist nationalism around the MCC is not only tarnishing the image of the parties and their leaders, but also Nepal's image as a nation. Hundreds of thousands of Nepalis are migrating to the Gulf and Malaysia every year for work because successive rulers since 1990 ruined the economy. It is their remittance that is keeping the country afloat.

Nepal currently does not have the capacity to mobilise sufficient resources to upgrade transmission lines. It also stands to waste Rs142 billion a year worth of electricity by 2025 if distribution capacity is not increased urgently.

Rejecting this grant is foolish, especially because most leaders today were on board when it was signed in 2017. 🇳🇵

Inside

Using power wisely EDITORIAL PAGE 2



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HYUNDAI

Using power wisely

Like a mirage, the nearer we get to Parliament's ratification of a \$500 million US-backed infrastructure project, the farther it seems to recede. But given the fecklessness of Nepali politics, nothing is over until it is over.

After the Maoist parliamentary party on Wednesday morning decided to vote against the ratification of the American grant, a scheduled House session was postponed till Friday. A Maoist-Unified Socialists vote against the project would have effectively led to the collapse of the ruling coalition led by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Nepali Congress, who would have to get help from the opposition UML to pass the project.

The Americans have set a firm 28 February deadline for ratification. The message to top Nepali leaders by US Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu last week may not have been a threatening 'take our gift, or else', but it was certainly a 'take it or leave it'.

Part of the problem is the acronym itself. The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is too awkwardly named and has a whiff of big business. Many ask: why are the Americans so keen to make us accept their gift if there is no hidden agenda?

Yes, geopolitics looms large. Nepal is used to being squeezed between China and India, but this time we are caught in a global Sino-US rivalry that has intensified since the rise of Xi Jinping, and the Trump years. We are now a yam between three boulders – although the Indians are for once strangely silent.

Outsiders are playing on the incompetence and greed of Nepal's rulers. None other than the country's prime minister and his coalition partner write a groveling letter to the project team in Washington DC begging for more time to 'build a consensus'.

All this makes the much vilified King Mahendra smell like roses. In comparison to these lilliputs, Mahendra was a towering statesman who balanced regional geopolitics, and prevented Nepal from being sucked into the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union.

When the Chinese built the Kodari Highway in the 1960s, there was consternation in New Delhi and pressure on Nepal's king who had just sent Indian security posts packing from Nepal's mountains.

India and China had recently fought a brutal Himalayan war, and Beijing had every

reason to consider Nepal an enemy nation since the Indian Army's Gorkha battalions were spilling blood in Ladakh and Arunachal.

Yet, Mahendra played deft diplomacy between New Delhi-Beijing-Washington-Moscow and got the superpowers to help with infrastructure and development projects.

What a far cry all that is from today. By vacillating on a project that they themselves signed, Nepal's leaders are coming off looking like untrustworthy fools. Who is going to take this bunch of clowns seriously anymore?

A project that would have catalysed the future economic development of Nepal has been weaponised for petty infighting. Actually, \$500 million is not peanuts, and

Nepal has already pledged its own \$130 million to increase the capacity of transmission lines and improve highways.

If there is not grant, Nepal has to take a loan. We just have to look at Sri Lanka to realise what a real debt trap looks like. Colombo rejected a \$480 million MCC two years ago by mishandling geopolitics and is now facing international ostracisation.

It is at a time like this that Nepal needs a leader of Mahendra's credentials. What would he have done? He would have approved both the MCC and the BRI, sent competent emissaries to keep Washington, Beijing and New Delhi

happy. We do not even have ambassadors in those capitals at the moment.

The big powers have bigger fish to fry, Nepal is not as strategic as we imagine ourselves to be. We can convince them that investment in Nepal's infrastructure will ensure domestic stability and

regional energy security.

Nepal will soon have surplus electricity supply thanks to Rs215 billion investment by Nepali citizens in private power projects (*see Anil Shah op-ed page 6-7*). It now needs help with distributing that power, for which the MCC project is crucial.

Nepal also needs help with connectivity, improving the country's decrepit highways, adding railways and airports, facilitating cross-border transit between India and China. That is where China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) would help.

Why does it have to be one or the other? Geopolitics is so polarised, and Nepal's domestic politics so fractious that we have lost our ability to balance these tectonic forces for the country's sustainable long-term economic wellbeing.

sending back a whopping \$850 million a year. Forget foreign aid and exports, forget tourism. It is overseas remittances that are propping up Nepal's economy.

Other Third World countries export minerals and ore. Nepal has a long history of exporting human beings. Today, Nepalis are going further afield, and into non-traditional jobs as opportunities expand for overseas employment—they are employed as security guards on casino ships in the South China Sea, as guards on oil rigs in Angola, and as hotel managers in China.

Back home, Nepal's tourism is down 50 percent, and the garment, carpet and pashmina industries have laid off an estimated 200,000 workers. More than half the garment workers in Nepal, according to a 1998 study, are in the 20-25 age group and most support families with more than six members. With unemployment soaring in virtually every sector, the number of Nepalis migrating abroad to work will only go up.

The government has made it easier for Nepalis to work abroad, but the country still isn't maximising the benefits from its labour export. Many Nepalis are duped and exploited by manpower agencies, who take away a large chunk of the workers' earnings in illegal deposits or commissions, often up to three times the actual cost of a job.

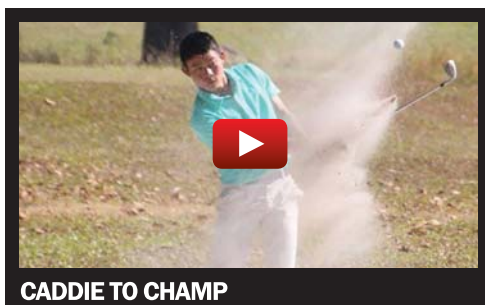
From archives material of *Nepali Times* of the past 20 years, site search: www.nepalitimes.com

ONLINE PACKAGES



DEATHBED DOCTOR

Meet Subarna Baidya, an Ayurvedic practitioner who takes care of dying patients at the Pashupati cremation site in Kathmandu. This crematoria doctor has saved many patients including those suffering from double kidney failure from the brink of death. Read his story and watch the video on our website.



CADDIE TO CHAMP

Golf is known as the rich man's game but 24-year-old Sukra Rai from Dharan is shattering the myth. This top-seed professional Nepali golfer was once a caddie but now has national and international titles under his belt. Follow his journey and watch him on his element in this video online.

LANDLESSNESS

Not all of the 'landless' want land, but rather secure reasonably paid employment or other economic opportunities ('Ground reality of landlessness in Nepal', Rabin Giri, #1097).

pigreen

REAL ESTATE

If only wishes were horses ('Kathmandu's unreal real estate prices', Ramesh Kumar, #1097). Those who can control the unchecked rise in the price of real estate are profiting themselves, while general people like us can only dream of owning a property one day.

Nash J Ne

INSURGENCY TO NOW

Nepal has gone from war to peace, from monarchy to republic, from Hindu state to secularism ('13 February', Editorial, #1098). All true, but also true, from bad to worse, from the frying pan to the fire, from self-reliant in food to importing them and most of all, from one king to several more.

Krishna Joshi

WOMEN IN SCIENCE

It reflects the increasing numbers of women in the professional workforce as the traditional way of thinking changes ('Sky is the limit for Nepal's women scientists', Anita Shrestha, nepalitimes.com). It is a gradual growth where parents are also likely more supportive, employers are more gender-neutral. I felt proud reading about their efforts.

Sandhya Acharya

• All these women scientists are a source of inspiration to all the Nepalis. We all can learn something from these figures.

Nimprasad Upadhyaya

• Truly inspiring but the article could have covered more of the established as well as budding talents. Many females have set their steps into social science, medicine and other technical fields. I am sure one day their work will be celebrated, and I will be enjoying reading it.

Birodh Pandey

• Nepal's leaders should open more universities across the country which in turn will create more opportunities. It is common to see Nepali scientists, professors and other professionals in their respective areas all over the world. With political will, we can bring them back home and help develop our own country.

Gyurme Dondup

ELECTRIC BUSES

Electric cars need to be subsidised ('Nepal goes electric, but conditions apply', Ramesh Kumar, *pages 10-11*). There is so much potential in Kathmandu for electrification: imagine how it will improve our air quality and we will function normally regardless of petrol shortages or price hikes.

Oliver Vanderpoorten

• The government could easily make a decision to promote EVs and reduce pollution by decreasing the high tax on battery-operated vehicles but that is not the case. What a pity.

Alan Roadnight

• Yes, electric cars will be helpful but charging exorbitant taxes is counterproductive.

Roger Ray

• A subway in Kathmandu, it wouldn't be economically viable. Bendi are best suited here: they are super cheap, are high capacity, don't take years to be built, use existing infrastructure and can also be electric.

Diwash Ghimire

Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING



Redefining art at Kathmandu Triennale 2077

by *Ashish Dhakal*

After being put off by the pandemic, Kathmandu Triennale, Nepal's largest art festival is back this year with a focus on inclusivity, diversity and local identity. A quick read on what to expect during this year's festivities.

f Most reached and shared on Facebook



13 February

Editorial

This past week marked the 26th anniversary of the start of the Maoist conflict. Although gone from war to peace, from monarchy to republic, from Hindu state to secularism, not much else has changed. Visit nepalitimes.com for more coverage on the Maoist conflict.

t Most popular on Twitter

Sky is the limit for Nepal's women scientists

by *Anita Shrestha*

Read about the work of five Nepali women scientists who have been making a mark in fields as diverse as medical research, engineering, genetics, and astrophysics. Head online to nepalitimes.com or any of *Nepali Times*' social media channels to discuss these or other inspiring women.

“ ” Most commented



Nepal art debut in Venice

Nepali Times

Nepal is set to make its debut at the Venice Biennale 2022 with the inaugural pavilion titled 'Tales of Muted Spirits – Dispersed Threads – Twisted Shangri-La'. Go to our website for the most-read article of the week and know more about Nepal's pavilion and the team behind it.

🔍 Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

#Editorial It is at a time like this that #Nepal needs a leader of Mahendra's stature and skill. What would he have done?

He would have approved both the #MCC and the #BRI, sent competent emissaries to keep #Washington, #Beijing and #NewDelhi happy.



dharma adhikari @dharmaadhikari

NT's write-ups, always masterful in prose, seldom fail to show the bigger picture. This is truly, and aptly, a wwid -- what would Jesus do -- analogy for Nepal :)



Mahabir Paudyal @mahabirpudyal

"Mahendra was a towering statesman who balanced regional geopolitics, and prevented Nepal from being sucked into the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union," thank you @NepaliTimes for telling the truth.



Shyamal Krishna Shrestha @ShresthaShyamal

Surprised to see NT do a U-turn on Nepal's monarchy.



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

When he turned 50, my father came back and passed on the foreign #employment baton to me. His experience in #SaudiArabia ensured that our family had enough to eat and our basic needs were met. My Kuwait experience elevated my family even more.



Besaray @joshi_sushma

Interesting new take featuring the positive sides of migration.

Remittance Economy



Nepal runs on remittance money: the blood, sweat and tears of Nepali migrant workers toiling overseas and India. It has kept the country's economy afloat during all the recent crises, letting governments off the hook for the failure in domestic job creation.

The only thing that has changed is that the contribution of remittances to the economy

has increased, but the treatment of migrant workers by the state has worsened. They are duped every step of the way before they reach destination countries, where they are often cheated.

During the pandemic, the government was mostly unable to provide them with relief or reintegrate returnees in employment schemes. Instead, workers came to Nepal's rescue with life-saving oxygen cylinders during the second wave.

Excerpts from a report published 20 years ago this week from issue #81 15-21 February 2002:

Tourism and exports are near-collapse, and yet the economy is still afloat. How come? Nepalis working abroad are now

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Diaspora Diaries 2

"I have experienced both being the son of a migrant worker, as well as a migrant father."



I am not sure where to start telling you the story of the journey of my life.

I come from a very simple family. My father's job as a court messenger was to deliver legal letters and messages. His salary was not enough to support our family, so in 1994 he went to Saudi Arabia where he found a job as a gardener, working outdoor in the desert heat.

We communicated in letters and if we did not hear from him for over two months, my mother would start crying. The letters my siblings and I wrote to him were formal, in a style they taught us in school. They all started with 'Sri Pujaneya Baba, Shastang Dandawat' (Respected father, I bow to you).

In all his letters over the years, my father reminded us to do well in school. One of them said:

"If I had studied, I would not have had to work here as a gardener. Even in Saudi Arabia, I would have got a much better job. I would have had opportunities for promotion. But there are no promotions for gardeners like me. This is why it is important that you study. I am working here to enable you to study hard."

When my father turned 50, I decided it was time to bring him back from Saudi Arabia. He had worked very hard for ten years, and it was my turn to step up.

My father came back, passed on the foreign employment baton to me. In 2004, I left for Kuwait to work as a security guard. The heat was oppressive and the work was not easy. Over a dozen of my colleagues went back to Nepal one by one, either because they were caught sleeping during duty hours and got laid off, or because they just could not bear the heat.

I stayed on, determined to keep working no matter how difficult

it got. I was promoted many times in the past 17 years from Shift Supervisor to Patrolling Supervisor to Operation Supervisor. Then I became the Assistant Operation Manager, Operation Manager and I am now the Assistant Managing Director.

I grew up delivering newspapers around Pokhara starting at 3AM on a rusty, donated bike for Rs1,000 a month. I used to be drenched in sweat and dizzy during my 12 hour shifts as a security guard when I first arrived in Kuwait.

The odds were stacked against me. I would have laughed if someone had told me I would have the position I am holding today. But it wasn't my education that helped me rise up the ranks. Little things like my English skills, integrity and work ethics did.

Foreign employment worked for me. It gave me a platform. When we aspire to go overseas, we go after manpower agents. We plead with them to connect us with jobs, we call or message them desperately. But the minute we get on the plane, we start scolding them.

If I met the manpower company owner who sent me to Kuwait, I would actually thank him. My success has meant that I have been able to lift my family back in Nepal out of poverty.

I have brought my brother-in-law and his son also to Kuwait for jobs. I have connected people from my village to well-paying work here. My financial strength has spillover effects on those associated with me.

Was it the Nepal government that helped me? No. It was the recruitment agency that gave me this opportunity. They get all the blame,

but never the credit for success stories like mine.

Of course, they deserve to be punished when they cheat workers, especially when they promise the wrong job or pay. But it is also true that they have done more for many than what the government ever did.

My father's experience in Saudi Arabia ensured that our family had enough to eat and our basic needs were met, even though we had no savings. My Kuwait experience elevated my family even more. All because of foreign employment.

Luck was on my side, I realise that. There are many like me who have done well. But I must say that a large majority of Nepalis come here and leave without making much progress in their salaries or positions.

Hard work is key. So is having a vision and proper planning so you have specific goals to strive towards. Many of us do not get that kind of guidance so we do not know how to make use of available opportunities.

Soft skills like computers and English proficiency are critical to make use of available opportunities of which there are plenty but not

well exploited by Nepalis. How do we inculcate that drive to keep learning and bettering ourselves so we are given opportunities to rise?

I started as a security guard but I relied on people around me to help me learn how to use a computer. I still remember shouting with joy when I typed a paragraph in a Word document and my colleague got it printed.

I have started getting comfortable with this lifestyle. After being stuck in Nepal for 8 months during the Covid-19 pandemic, I have changed



my mind about returning anytime soon. I explored opportunities in the hotel and restaurant line back home but was unable to muster the courage to make an investment and start something on my own.

For me, foreign employment is a secure option. I have seen many friends who returned to Nepal for good, used up all their savings in some unsuccessful venture and came right back to Kuwait. After so many years away, we do not have the network, contextual knowledge or the ability to deal with the corruption that defines every aspect of life in Nepal. The idea that honest work can help us succeed in Nepal feels a bit far-fetched at the moment.

Of course you miss the little things like taking your children to school or playing with them. But having experienced both being the son of a migrant as well as a migrant father, I can say the situation is much better now for transnational parenting.

When I was a boy, the postman used to come every Thursday as we waited for our father's letters. Sometimes the letters would be stuck somewhere and we would receive all six on the same day after six months of radio silence and panic. Now I see my children every few months in person and talk to them every day.

Despite being away from Nepal, I feel like I can contribute more from here than if I were back home. Whether during earthquake or Covid-19, we have sent a lot of support to Nepal including oxygen cylinders.

There are many Nepalis who require help in the Gulf region, and I find myself spending a good chunk of my salary and time every month helping them. I am lucky that I can do that. I often get sentimental when I go back to my apartment after

AT HOME ABROAD: Hom Nath Giri behind his desk at a company in Kuwait City (*above, left*).

Giri with his father and mother when they visited him in Kuwait in 2018. His father toiled as a gardener in Saudi Arabia to support his family, he died a year after this picture was taken.

dealing with people who need help. I write poetry to get the weight off my chest.

What was most distressing was having to walk out of Kathmandu airport once behind men who were pushing two coffins in luggage trolleys. The bodies had been repatriated in the same flight as mine. Later, I composed these lines:

घर गाउँमा रुवाबासि पिर पठाएछ,
सम्भ्रमलाई अन्तिम चिनो तस्विर पठाएछ।
खुशि बोकी घर फिर्छु भन्थ्यो परदेशीले,
कठै आज बाकसभित्र शरिर पठाएछ।

*He said he would come home and bring joy,
But he brought back tears and grief.
He sent a photograph as a parting gift.
Alas! He sent his own body home in a box.*

That, too, is foreign employment. One of my favourite memories is when I brought my father to Kuwait in 2018. He came to my office and sat with pride behind my desk. He told me all those years of toil in Saudi Arabia had been well worth it.

What I have achieved in my life is in large part due to the motivating letters our father wrote to us from Saudi Arabia. He sacrificed his life for us. We lost him last year, and I miss him every day. 🇳🇵

Translated from a conversation with Hom Nath Giri in Kuwait. Diaspora Diaries is a regular column in Nepali Times providing a platform for Nepalis to share their experiences of living, working, studying abroad. Authentic and original entries can be sent to editors@nepalitimes.com with Diaspora Diaries in the subject line.

prabhu BANK

Turkish goes green

Turkish Airlines has started to use Sustainable aviation fuel on some of its flights. The green fuel will be used one day a week on selected sectors with plans to expand to other areas. The carrier is reducing the carbon footprint of passengers by 87% compared to regular fossil fuels.



Turkish Airlines Chair Ahmet Bolat says: "We are the airline that flies to more countries than any other in the world. We conduct our work towards achieving sustainability with that mentality and responsibility."

DishHome MegaFi

DishHome fibernet has started MegaFi offer with 600 and 300 Mbps speed internet through the WiFi 6 mega router for the first time in Nepal which runs four times faster than the previous WiFi.

Ncell reduced rates

Ncell has reduced the rate for their local calls to Rs1.62 per minute from Rs1.99. The voice call rates are applicable all over Nepal for prepaid users. Customers can start the benefit by dialling *17107# and selecting 1 in the menu.

Subisu Offer

Subisu has launched the super rafter offer wherein customers can receive 650Mbps speed Internet and four ClearTV subscriptions at a discounted rate of Rs1,770 per month.

Nissan Navara

Nissan has launched the 'lifestyle-edition' of its all-new Navara line with intelligent mobility features and safety systems including a new steering wheel, emergency braking, vehicle dynamic control, traction control system and high beam assist. Navara is available in five variants costing from Rs9.55 million to Rs11.6 million.

IME-Everest tie-up

Customers of Everest Bank can now connect their account with the Global IME's IME Pay app and enjoy services including transfers and payment receipts without additional charges. Meanwhile, Global IME has opened a new extension counter in Gorkha's Biruwatar area.

TEDx + Turkish



of Turkish Airlines (*above*) said: "For us Nepal is an important tourism destination, and we know it more than mountains. With TEDx we will highlight Nepal's growth in every field." Sudeep Rauniar of TEDx Durbar Marg said the TEDTalk and Regional Summit will be hosted in May in Kathmandu.

New JICA chief

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has appointed Akimitsu Okubo as its new representative for JICA Nepal Office. He has over two decades of experience in the governance sector, handling international cooperation and was with the Law and Justice Team at JICA headquarters in Tokyo and managed projects in Nepal, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, and West African countries.

Tilganga Nijgad

Tilganga Eye Hospital with the Nijgad Municipality has started cataract operations at Nijgad Tilganga Community Eye Hospital. It aims to treat more than



200,000 patients in five years and is funded by Australia's Fred Hollows Foundation and the Nepal Eye Program.

IME Motors offer

IME Motors has started the IME Swarojgari Abhiyan that provides finance facilities up to 80% without collateral for any LCV/ DOST light commercial vehicle and three month free EMI to drivers, returnee migrants or those without a job wanting to start their own business.



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To be or not to be on the MCC

Billions invested by Nepalis in hydropower plants will be in danger if transmission lines are not built

● Anil Shah

On 28 February, we will come either to the finish or starting line of the US-funded Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) project to upgrade Nepal's infrastructure. The \$500 million that the MCC is offering Nepal as a grant for the development of transmission lines and improving the road network needs to be ratified through Parliament by that date. There has been a lot of debate in Nepal's cybersphere and political arena that is spilling out into the streets. The points of view are highly charged and polarised. We left logic behind a long time ago — we are now debating on emotion and rhetoric. When King Mahendra wanted the Chinese to build the Arniko Highway connecting Kathmandu to Lhasa in the 1960s, there was a similar debate about whether or not it was a good idea. India and China had just fought a



What the Chinese think about

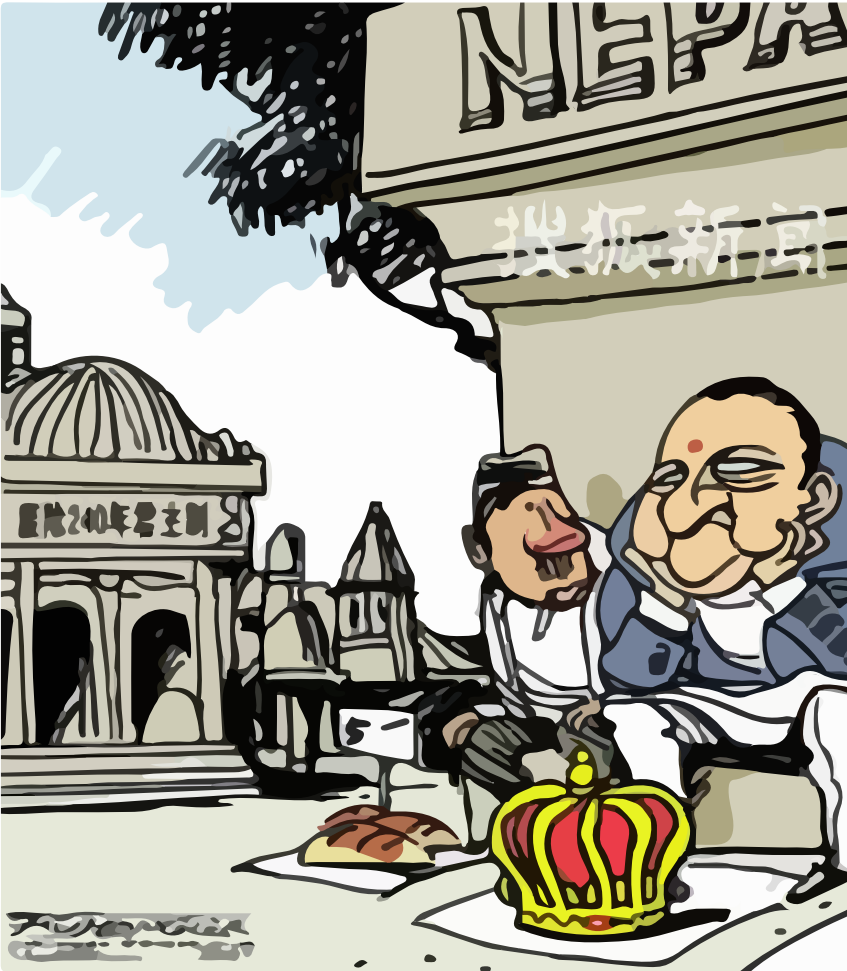
After 2006, Beijing muted criticism of Prachanda because his party is 'Maoist'

● Aneka Rajbhandari

In 2017, I had just started my undergraduate studies at Peking University in Beijing. One of my Chinese classmates asked me why the Nepal's communists used Mao in their party's name. She was troubled that China's revered leader had been turned into an icon for armed struggle and violence. My friend's opinion was valid because even in Nepal, the very word 'Maoist' still instills fear in many Nepalis who witnessed the strikes, murders and kidnappings during the conflict decade.

In fact, my classmate's concern was in line with the Chinese government's initial concern when the Maoist insurrection started. In early 2000s, China's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Liu Jianchao stated that the rebels had 'usurped' the name of Mao Zedong. Mao had led the Communist Party of China to power in 1949 after years of violent struggle, he said, and China had no connection with the rebel group in Nepal. Ironically, the Chinese government labelled the Maoists in Nepal as 'terrorists' criticising them for being anti-government and bringing disorder to the country. In 2001, the *Contemporary World* magazine of the Communist Party of China International Department published a piece titled 'Increasingly Active: Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)' which described the leaders as being solipsistic, neither able to create unity within the party nor with allies in other parties.

The writer went on to claim that most Nepalis did not support the Maoists because the party was regarded as being 'grossly out of touch with the reality in Nepal' and even the international community hesitated to recognise it 'because of their association with international terrorist organisations'. However, after 2006 when the Comprehensive Peace Accord was signed, the Chinese stance changed. The initial official reaction to Maoism in Nepal that used to be fueled with skepticism and disdain, was replaced with a narrative that improved Mao's own image. Prachanda (Pushpa Kamal Dahal) was suddenly seen as a trail-blazer against feudalism in Nepal. Some unbiased content still lives in academic literature by Chinese scholars, but the citations are not accessible anymore. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) used Maoism as a suffix, instead of its main guiding principle. In fact, Mao Zedong



Cartoon by Fu Hongge depicting an uncrowned Gyanendra in an article titled 'Prachanda after Nepal abolishes 240-year monarchy'

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war, and the Cold War was at its height. Many worried that the trans-Himalayan highway would give direct access to our northern neighbour to the heart of Nepal and down to the plains, while others felt that this would open up trade and commerce between Nepal and China.

King Mahendra pushed ahead and built the Arniko Highway, for the past 60 years it has been a major artery for bilateral trade.

Similarly in the 1990s, there was intense domestic and international debate on the Arun 3 project that would have not only met all of Nepal's energy demand at the time, but also allowed export of surplus to India.

After much acrimonious debate, the World Bank pulled out of Arun 3, pretty much putting an end to the development of major projects in Nepal for decades.

At this time, Bhutan was negotaiting with India to harness its water resources -- using the revenue from electricity export to enhance the quality of life of its people, and raise per capita income.

Decades later, we in Nepal are still struggling to use water resources for national development and lift living standards.

Once again, we as a nation and people, stand at the crossroads to decide whether to accept the \$500 million grant to improve transmission capacity and enhance our road network or not.

The people who need to examine facts and make this decision are political leaders who we have trusted with our vote and put into Parliament. Their decision must be for the wellbeing of all Nepalis, and Nepal as a

nation, now and into the future.

As per the direction of Nepal Rastra Bank and the government, the banking industry as of mid-December 2021, had invested Rs215 billion in energy projects across Nepal.

We need to increase this to 7% of the total loan portfolio by April, then to 9% by 2023 and 10% by 2024. This translates to 1,920MW of installed capacity, with construction licenses for 7,870MW. Of these, 214 projects are by private producers for 6,970MW, and foreign investment for 900 MW.

In addition, another 37 projects for 2,576MW and 1,200MW of Investment Board Nepal (IBN) projects have applied for construction licenses. By the end of this fiscal year alone, we anticipate installed capacity to grow to 3,300MW.

The nation's focus on generating hydro-energy is working, we are well on our way to being a major energy producing nation.

This means that currently, Rs215 billion of bank deposits of Nepali citizens are already invested in these projects through loans, and the amount will increase exponentially in the years ahead.

The hard-earned savings of millions of Nepalis are the main source of funding for the development of these projects. We stand at a point where we have to firstly stimulate domestic demand and consumption of electricity, and secondly facilitate the export of electricity to our neighbours.

The common and critical factor for both these goals is to increase distribution capacity so we can effectively and efficiently evacuate electricity, and get the power to the internal

or external markets to spur the economy.

If we do not start to put the needed transmission infrastructure in place to do this, the turbines will spin uselessly, wasting electricity. The losses will be phenomenal. Nepal's entire financial sector will be in peril if the hydropower projects face so much loss from spilled energy.

MCC or no MCC, if we do not have the transmission lines in place at the earliest, the savings of millions of Nepalis that the banking sector has been directed to lend will be in, let's say, troubled waters.

Many thousands of Nepalis who have invested in shares of hydro projects may also lose out if the transmission lines are not built. Politicians who have ordered the banking sector to invest such a large quantum of the Nepali people's savings in the energy sector must have a Plan B if the MCC is not going through. As a banker, all I can say is whether we take this \$500 million grant from the MCC or take loans from somewhere else, we need to get the funds to increase transmission capacity to distribute power from new plants.

28 February is only a week away. Nepal's leaders need foresight and courage to make the correct decision for the future. It is a choice between darkness and light, continued deprivation and prosperity. 🇳🇵



Anil Shah is a concerned Nepali, and a banker. This opinin is excerpted from a post on the NNSD Group.

... Nepal's Maoists



ear monarchy' in *Chongqing Wanbao* 重庆晚报 News.

himself was firmly opposed to using 'Maoism' as a political label for his ideology.

In a conversation with Wang Jiaxiang, a senior leaders of CPC, Mao said: "Maoism cannot be mentioned. I am a student of Marx and Lenin. How can I rank with them? Marx has Marxism, Lenin has Leninism, I cannot be labelled 'Maoism'. I have no 'ism'. My 'ism' is Marxism and Leninism. You must mention Mao Zedong Thought. Everyone has their own thoughts. We can't casually mention 'ism'. I still believe that I haven't matured as a system of thought. It's not modesty, it's true."

According to the CPC constitution, Mao Zedong Thought is 'the application and development of Marxism-Leninism in China and the correct theoretical principles and empirical summary of China's revolution and construction proved by practice'.

In 2013, a Chinese student published a paper titled 'Maoism in the eyes of Communist Party of Nepal' in Liaocheng University's *Social Science Journal* identifying 'Maoism' as the suffix of the party's name, and was only a strategic choice under certain circumstances, not all of the party's actions were

guided by 'Maoism'.

Nor had 'Maoism' proved to be able to guide its actions in parliamentary battles, the paper elaborated, describing the Maoists' bottomless compromise with other political parties in Nepal as a violation of the basic principles of Marxism, and the party's division had a hand in this.

The paper suggested that if Nepal's Maoists wanted to adhere to the revolutionary line in future, they must adopt the basic principles of being a proletarian party and have new theoretical guidance to ensure that it will not degenerate into reformism.

If there is one person Beijing decided to give attention to among Nepal's Maoists, it was Prachanda. Although NCP (Maoist) received its fair share of criticism from China initially, the initial interviews with him by Chinese media tell a different story.

In a detailed interview with *Global Times* in 2007 soon after the ceasefire, Prachanda (Pushpa Kamal Dahal) was asked if he would run for president. He modestly replied that he would if the people and the party required him to. But he would do so only once and and after that lay low, be a member of the Party

Central Committee and "slowly retire, read, write and do research".

A year later, the Maoists swept the election to the Constituent Assembly, and Dahal was elected prime minister. Ten years later, he became Nepal's prime minister for the second time.

By 2008, there were articles and interviews introducing Dahal and stories of his revolution. In a 2008 interview article featured in *China Daily*, Dahal confessed that he was envious about how China dealt with Pu Yi (China's last emperor).

He added: 'If Gyanendra like Pu Yi becomes a commoner, it will be a blessing for the Nepali people.'

The interviewer was impressed by Dahal's simple lifestyle in Kathmandu, and the devotion of the people for him. He relates how when he arrived for the interview at 6AM there were already people waiting to see him. The interviewer says there was a 'common phrase in Nepal that anyone can have a handshake with Prachanda'.

China seems to tolerate Dahal despite his perceived incompetence because of the attachment of Mao's name to his party, which carries China's face. K P Oli, on the other hand, has been criticised in the Chinese media for allowing the

split in the NCP and the UML.

To be sure, Dahal has not tested the Chinese government's patience like Oli has, but even the criticism Dahal receives within Nepal does not cross over to China, while Oli's does. The Chinese government seems to be careful about any negativity towards CPN (Maoist) and manages news on him within China to save its own face.

Dahal's present predicament with the MCC in Nepal could either further improve or completely ruin his stature in China. State media here could have denounced Deuba and Dahal for their recently exposed secret letter to the MCC, but it was largely ignored.

Dahal belongs to the Maoist Centre and signed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – this seems to have made him immune to criticism in China. However, the final decision on MCC is not only going to test Nepal's ties with China, but also Dahal's faithfulness to the Mao brand. 🇳🇵



Aneka Rajbhandari is a Masters student of Chinese politics at the Silk Road School, Renmin University of China.

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EVENTS



Magical Friday

Attend this show by magician Pratham Oli and relive your weeklong stress this Friday evening.
18 February, 6pm onwards, Ventures Cafe, Baluwatar

Simon Soon

Join artist and art historian Simon Soon as he shares his lo-fi speculative journey into visualising a cosmopolitan history of Himalayan modernism through Gendun Chapel's work 'A treatise on Passion'.
18 February, 3-4pm, Taragoan Museum



Lakure Bhanjyang Hike

Be one with nature in the six-hour hike organised by Altitude trails and adventures. Call for further details.
19 February, Rs1200, 9801154725

Global Citizenship Workshop

Attend the Global Citizenship Workshop covering a range of topics including GCED, migration, multiculturalism and the Sustainable Development Goals. Register to attend.
21-25 February

Bal Sahitya Mahotsav

Nepal's largest children's lit festival by Rato Bangala Foundation returns with the 7th edition to be conducted on the theme 'Social-Emotional Skills through Literature.' Register now at <https://bit.ly/3rgSEMh>
25-27 February

DINING



Turkish Kebabs

Head to Turkish Kebabs and Pizza Hub for some authentic Turkish cuisine in town. Order the kebabs, or try Turkish street food Dhurum.
Ekantakuna, (01) 5439733

ONLINE ARCHIVES

Ridiculous History

Join Ben Bowlin and Noel Brown as they uncover some of the weirdest stories of human civilisation. History is beautiful, brutal but never this weird. Find it on Stitcher.

Kahoot!

Join Kahoot!, a free game-based learning platform that brings fun and learning together. Play at work, school or at home.



Comic library

Comic fan, but unable to get your hands on the series you want? Go to Comic Library where you can access comic books from Star Wars to Disney classics. Visit the website to find out more.

Coursera

Coursera partners with universities, organisations, and trusts around the world to provide free online courses on science, technology and engineering. Register for one and start studying.



This is home

With Google's This is Home virtual tour viewers can get glimpses of unique traditional structures from around the world with their history. Tune in.

GETAWAY



Dhulikhel Mountain Resort

A perfect getaway, from the blend of bungalows with Newa influences to the views of majestic Himalayan peaks. Also offers body massage and spa services, cultural dance programs in the evening, and appetising multi-cuisine food.
Dhulikhel, (01) 4420774

Mountain Glory Forest Resort

Distress at this resort located at a small distance from Lakeside and on banks of the Seti River with the breathtaking views of the mountains accompanied with tranquil surroundings.
Dovilla, Pokhara, 9856064223



Megghauli Serai

Leave worries behind and spend a few days at this luxurious safari lodge overlooking the Rapti River. Indulge yourself with accommodation that integrates local culture and art with amenities.
Chitwan National Park, 9851218500

Himalaya Hotel Lodge

Experience village life with a weekend stay at Himalaya Hotel Lodge away from the hustle and bustle of city life.
Ghandruk, (01) 5523900

Newa Chén

Newa Chén is reminiscent of the Malla dynasty with its ancient architecture and open courtyard plan. This setup is within walking distance of Patan Darbar Square, the cultural hub of the Valley.
Kobahal, Lalitpur, (01)5533532

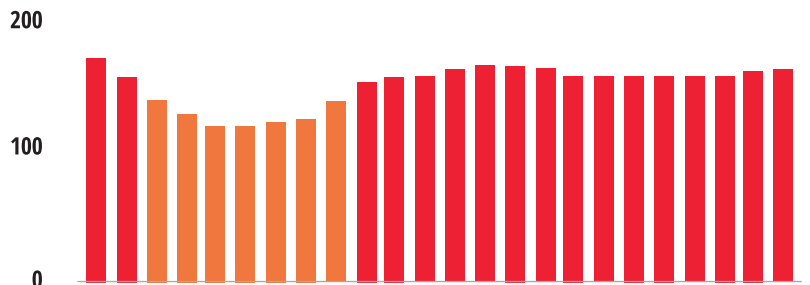
WEEKEND WEATHER



There is spring in the air, as the maximum temperature climbs back to more normal levels. It will touch nearly 20°C in Kathmandu on Friday, while the minimum will stay below 5°C for now. There is no major westerly system, but a weak low pressure will pass through Central Nepal on Saturday evening onwards, bringing some cloud cover and a 20% chance of isolated precipitation in Kathmandu Valley. But these will probably be light and brief. The clouds mean the maximum temperature will dip again next week, but it will be increasingly balmy when the sun is out and mornings will be smoggy due to city pollution as well the blue smoke haze over northern India seen in this satellite photo taken on Thursday.

| FRIDAY | SATURDAY | SUNDAY |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 20° 6° | 19° 5° | 17° 4° |

AIR QUALITY INDEX

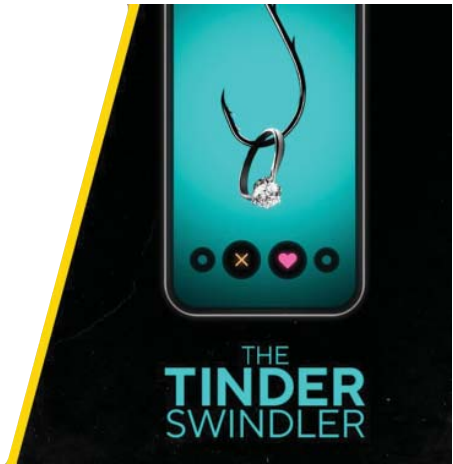


Despite the drop in traffic on Wednesday morning due to the anti-MCC shutdown called by fringe left parties, it did not make a difference on the Air Quality Index (AQI). The graph for 9AM 15 February to 9AM 16 February (*above*) measured at Phora Darbar shows consistently high concentrations of particulate matters, keeping AQI in the Red 'Hazardous' zone all morning. This is because of the inversion layer in the Valley, the lack of breeze and cross-border transport of soot particles from the north Indian plains. Visibility will stay poor up to an elevation of 3,000m over the weekend due to these prevailing conditions.

OUR PICK

In this highly acclaimed British true crime documentary film *The Tinder Swindler* released earlier this month on Netflix, a group of European women join forces to bring down a dating app based Israeli swindler named Simon Leviev posing as a wealthy, jet-setting diamond mogul to steal millions of dollars from them.

Spoiler Alert: The swindler is out of a brief jail stint, and back in Israel and up to his old tricks on Tinder.

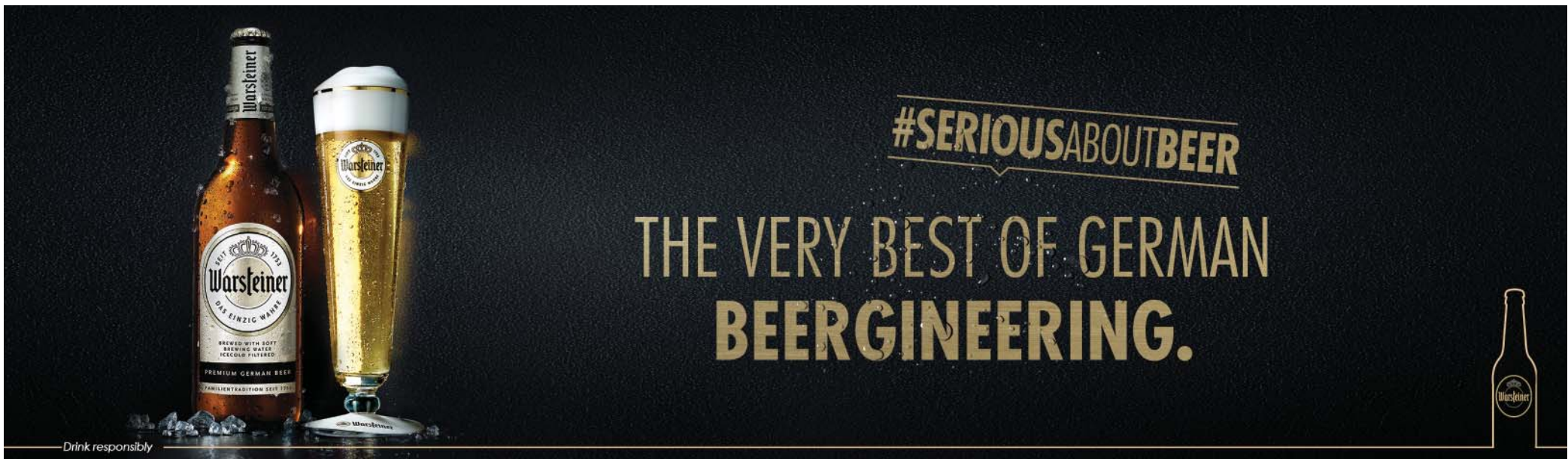


कोभिड-१९ विरुद्धको खोप सरकारले निःशुल्क लगाइरहेको छ ।



अबैध रुपमा खोप बेच्ने र किनेर लगाउने दुवैलाई प्रचलित कानुन बमोजिम कडा कारवाही हुनेछ ।
कोरोना विरुद्धको खोप बेचबिखन भएको थाहा पाउने जो कोहीले स्थानीय प्रशासन, प्रहरी कार्यालय, पालिका वा स्वास्थ्य कार्यालयमा यथार्थ जानकारी गराउनु हुन अनुरोध छ ।

बजारमा लुकिछिपी बेच्न राखिएका खोपहरु नक्कली हुन सक्छन् ।





BIKKIL STHAPIT/VOICES OF WOMEN MEDIA



GITA RASAILI/VOICES OF WOMEN MEDIA

HOPING AGAINST HOPE: Nagma Mali (*left*) holding a picture of her father Nandagopal Mali. Nagma's grandmother with Nangma and her sister Swastika.

on the whereabouts of nearly 1,500 still missing.

“If we don’t fight, the disappeared will also be forgotten,” adds Nagma, who is now with the organisation Voices of Women Media and is also affiliated with the Conflict Victim Women National Network. “The truth is missing just like those who were made to disappear.”

What worries Nagma most is the fate of children affected by the disappearances during the conflict and says the Maoist-led government has treated them unfairly. Children of those declared martyrs get free of cost education up to any level but for the children of the disappeared, it stops at 18 years of age.

“Pushpa Kamal Dahal looked after only his people after his purpose was served. What about us, the children of the disappeared? When will the consequences of your action be addressed?” Nagma questions the top Maoist leadership.

How long should one wait for the disappeared person to come back? A month? A year? A decade? For Nagma, the answer is as long as she lives.

She says: “As long as there is a hope of my father’s return, my search will continue. I won’t ever give up.”

Still looking for her missing Dad

A daughter grows up to be a journalist to find her missing father who disappeared 17 years ago during the insurgency

● Anita Bhetwal

On 22 June 2004, Nandagopal Mali left home in Thecho, Lalitpur as usual for his workshop where he was casting a bronze statue for a customer. He hasn’t been seen since.

His daughter Nagma, who was eight at the time, kept waiting for her dad. Seventeen years later, she is still waiting.

Having already lost her mother three years previously, while giving birth to her younger sister, Nagma could never accept that her father was gone and with no official proof of his demise, held on to the hope that he would come back one day.

Soon after Nandagopal went missing, Nagma’s grandfather Sanu Mali took charge of searching for his son but he passed away soon after.

It was then Nagma’s grandmother who stepped up, relentlessly questioning Royal Nepal Army officials and holding protests every day in Maitighar.

One day, after returning from daily protests, Nagma’s grandmother told her about two children who were also searching for their missing parents.

Nagma was a quiet girl whose first instinct was to hide when someone visited her home, but she decided to join her grandmother on the streets.

“It was my grandmother who made me the strong, independent person that I am today, fighting for justice,” says Nagma. “She also involved me in all important decision making, installing self-confidence in me.”

She followed her grandmother to the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons and participated in every program advocating justice for crimes committed during the Maoist conflict. She met others like her with missing parents, but had not given up the search.

By then Nagma had completed her secondary education and was trying to decide on her career. One day, Nagma’s grandmother was stopped at the Chauni army barrack and was not allowed in.

This was when Nagma realised that you either had to be someone

with influence or a journalist to gain access to important places and people.

Nagma enrolled at Ratna Rajya Campus for a degree in journalism. But before long her only remaining support, her grandmother, died leaving her in charge of raising younger sister Swastika. But Nagma persisted and kept looking for her father on her own.


She tried to visit top-ranking officials, joined the ‘Martyrs and Disappeared Warrior Children’ foundation and submitted a memorandum to the government

to reveal the whereabouts of her missing father. But as her questions went unanswered and the state failed to investigate the case, her faith in the Disparaged Persons Committee started to erode.

She then turned to the Central Bureau of Investigation and studied for the Civil Service Commission exam with the hopes of joining the police force and finding her father herself. But as the sole earner of the family paying for both her and Swastika’s studies, she wasn’t able to keep up and did not sit for the paper.

“Over the years I have often questioned myself if he was still alive. More than 15 years have passed, it has been a painful wait,” says Nagma, who strengthened her resolve once again and demanded that the government disclose information on the disappeared persons regardless of their state.

After the peace talks in 2006, the Maoists became part of the government. The country went from the war to peace but the families of the disappeared continued to wait. None of the agencies set up to investigate war crimes are working



RATO BANGALA FOUNDATION

VACANCY

Organization Lead

Job Details: Full-time Position

Organizational Overview

Rato Bangala Foundation is a UNESCO-awarded non-profit that works to transform communities through quality education. In its two decades of work, it has reached 32 districts of Nepal in teacher education. Its projects are focused primarily on early childhood and primary grades.

Expected Qualifications

Masters or a higher degree in a relevant field. Sound knowledge of Nepal’s school education system, and the non-profit sector and its mechanism.

Skills Expected

Leadership, project management, facilitation and presentation, staff management, communication and networking, financial management, fundraising and interpersonal and analytical skills.

Fully proficient in spoken and written English and Nepali.


Key Responsibilities

- Serve as a spokesperson for the Foundation and provide strategic leadership to develop and lead the organization.
- Work to realize RBF’s mission with a commitment to continue to build and position the organization as a leader in teacher education.
- Mission driven, result oriented and self directed individual.
- Work collaboratively across the organization with a high performing team.
- Develop and manage projects from start to completion and follow up with a focus on child centered practices.
- Write grants and raise funds for meaningful programs.

Interested candidates are requested to submit their application to contact@ratobangala.edu.np by 15 March, 2022.

P.O. Box: 202, Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur, Nepal
Tel: +977-01-5546843, +977-01-5522614 | www.rbf.org.np

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Interested candidates are requested to submit the application form online from the Rato Bangala School website by 4 March 2022.

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Tel: 5522614, 5534318, 5542045
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New study uses Cold War technology to pinpoint sources of the worsening air pollution in Kathmandu Valley

● **Sonia Awale**

Everyone in Kathmandu knows we breathe some of the dirtiest air in the world. As if we needed any more proof, a new study uses technology developed during the Cold War to analyse radioactive particles to pinpoint where the pollution is coming from.

In the first week of November in 2020, the concentration of PM2.5 in Kathmandu's air doubled in a matter of a few days. A *Nepali Times* pollution monitoring project measured an Air Quality Index (AQI) as bad as 430 at its peak.

Satellite images showed blue smoke from Pakistan and India's Punjab and Haryana blanketing the Indo-Gangetic plains and Nepal's Tarai and moving up the Himalayan valleys. Farmers were burning post-harvest biomass, and the link between the two was obvious.

Now, international researchers have used a technology originally developed by the US military to locate Soviet atomic tests by analysing tiny particles in the air blown across the Pacific by prevailing winds.

The model is now used widely for real-time wildfire smoke detection and forecasting, and to study stationary sources of anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases.

Satellite-based sensors showed that the smoke was from more than 3,000 active fires in Punjab and Haryana, its plume transported by prevailing winds to the foothills of the Himalaya and up to Kathmandu Valley.

"It was not just the open burning in Haryana and Punjab but also weather conditions that allowed for aerosols concentrated in the southern plains to be transported to Kathmandu and higher elevations," says climate scientist Binod



Pokharel, one of the authors of the recent paper in the journal *Atmospheric Pollution Research*.

The team consisting mainly of Nepali scientists deployed the tongue-twistingly named Hybrid Single-Particle Lagrangian Integrated Trajectory (HYSPLIT), a computer model that computes air parcel trajectories to determine how far and in what direction pollutants will travel.

"Our main objective was to start a multilateral dialogue between countries in the region because while local solutions are important, air pollution is also a transboundary problem and needs committed

leaders working together to develop and implement policies prioritising air pollution and mitigate its impact on public health," adds Pokharel, who is Associate Professor at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu.

Lack of real-time data at ground level and different elevations due to a limited number of functioning air monitoring stations has been a major hurdle for scientists who have had to rely only on modelling. For example, air pollution in Kathmandu peaked again in March 2021 reaching AQI over 600 after unprecedented wildfires raged across Nepal following winter drought.

Another recently-published research

confirmed that vehicular emissions are a major source of air pollution in Kathmandu Valley, and old buses and poorly maintained vehicles make it worse.

Researchers conducted composite measurements of particulate matter, carbon monoxide, sulphur, nitrogen dioxide and ozone and built a comprehensive diesel vehicle emission inventory of Nepal from 1989 to 2018.

Published in the journal *Science of the Total Environment* the researchers found diesel consumption in Nepal increased 13-fold during the study period, and concluded that fuel quality and poor engine maintenance

While private EV sales boom, battery-operated buses fail to gain traction because of high taxes

● **Ramesh Kumar**

There has been a spurt in imports of electric vehicles in the past six months since the government restored tax rebates, but there has not been a similar increase in the much more important battery-operated public transport sector.

Nepal imported 1,113 electric cars, jeeps and vans between last July and December, 2021 – nearly five times more than the same period last fiscal year when 249 such 4-wheelers were imported.

"Imports of electric vehicles increased as a direct result of the government's revenue policy to discourage fossil fuel cars," says Nawaraj Poudel of the Nepal Energy Vehicle Association (NEVA). However, there is a 50% cash margin threshold for diesel and petrol cars, but there is no such limit for electric vehicles, which has kept the prices of battery cars high.

Still, since the excise and customs duties on electric vehicles were reduced, they were competitive compared to petroleum-based vehicles which have much higher taxes.

From last July to December 2021, Rs3.24 billion worth of electric four-wheelers were

imported, up from only Rs105.1 million during the same period last fiscal year.

However, besides the high dealer margins on electric cars making them expensive, there is also a shortage of battery vehicles because of global supply chain disruptions. This means many customers are on six month waiting lists to buy their electric vehicles.

"It is not possible to buy electric vehicles off the shelf right now," says Dhruva Bahadur Thapa of NADA (Nepal Automobile Dealers Association) "The shortage of chips has slowed vehicle production. And this has also affected India and Nepal."

Although consumers of private vehicles have been able to reap the benefits of the government's changes in tax policy, the same has not been true for public transport.

Sundar Yatayat ordered 20 Chinese electric buses, but they have been stuck at the Birganj customs checkpoint for the last three weeks because of a dispute over how much they should be taxed.

"The government has fixed only 1% customs on public electric vehicles, but they said we have to pay 13% VAT and 5% tax, so we are negotiating," says Bhes Bahadur Thapa of Sundar Yatayat. "Apart from the taxes, the number plate charge and other fees drive up the cost of electric buses which are already more expensive than diesel buses."

A diesel bus of the same size costs up to Rs4.5 million but the tax for an electric bus alone is as much, putting the price tag of Sundar's Chinese buses at nearly Rs20 million each.

"If the government scraps the road tax for electric buses, the cost will come down by Rs1.3 million," says Thapa. "We will sell

Nepal goes electric,



Sundar Yatayat electric bus

the buses to India if the government does not review its policy."

The main reason electric buses have not been able to compete with their petroleum counterparts is that there is hardly any difference in the taxes they pay. Although the excise duty, customs and other charges on petroleum private vehicles is more than 240%, private electric vehicles pay ten times less. This has encouraged consumers to buy private electric vehicles.

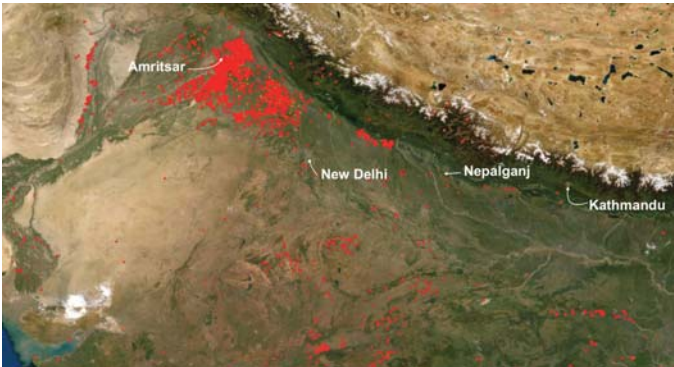
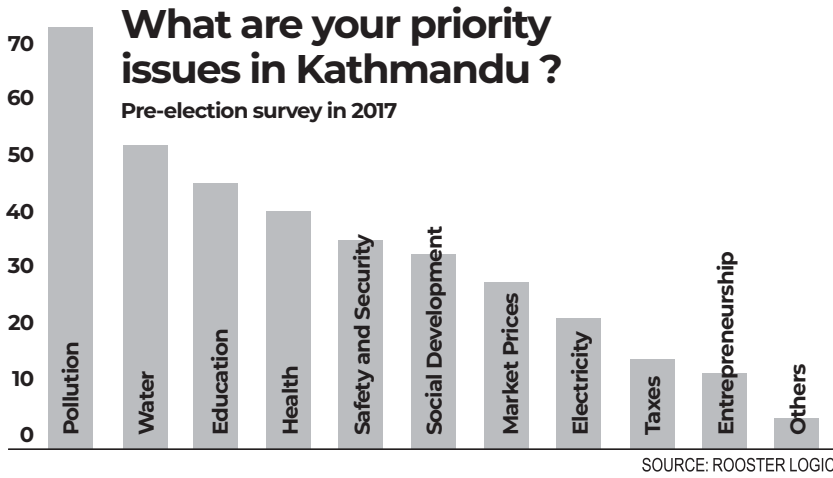
But in the case of public transport, even petroleum buses enjoy special tax breaks. Moreover, the showroom price of electric buses is upward of Rs10 million. Although it may look like all electric vehicles enjoy similar concessions, there is no real rebate for electric buses.

"Even when consuming electricity at night, they have to pay extra in the name of demand charge. No matter whom we talk to in the government regarding change in policies



AMIT MACHAMASI

were the main culprits for pollution. “We found that regular servicing and maintenance of vehicles can reduce pollution by up to 60% and this figure is even higher at 90% for petrol-run automobiles,” says Bhupendra Das, lead author and researcher at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies in Potsdam, Germany. “But the real solution lies in finding the political will to replace fossil fuel vehicles with electric ones, and introducing Euro 6 vehicles, most of all we need to revise and update our transport policies,” says Das, who is also associated with Tribhuvan University. All this is not just bad news for public



RED DOT MAP: Each red dot represents biomass burning on both side of the India-Pakistan border on 21 October 2020. Researchers have now traced suspended particles from those fires that reached Nepal.

health and the global climate, but the soot particles called ‘black carbon’ are also carried up to the mountains where they are deposited on the ice and snow, making them absorb more sunlight and melt faster. Nepal has pledged that at least 25% of all private passenger car sales and 20% of public transport vehicles will be battery-powered by 2025, but government policy does not reflect this. Presently, while private electric SUVs get a tax rebate, it is diesel buses that are subsidised, while electric ones cost five times more because of high customs duty and other taxes (*read story below*). Both India and China have committed to only manufacturing battery-operated vehicles from 2030. The world has now moved on to the possibility of zero-emission with hydrogen fuel, but Nepal’s policies do not reflect its Glasgow goals. As a result, air pollution in Nepal’s cities is getting worse and is a leading cause of asthma, high blood pressure, lung inflammation, congenital disabilities, mental disorders, various cancers and allergic hypersensitivity. Air pollution was the direct cause of 42,100 deaths across the country in 2019, and is reducing the average lifespan of people by at least four years. A United Nations report this week stated that pollution and toxic substances cause 9 million premature deaths annually, much more than the Covid-19 pandemic that has claimed 5.8 million lives in the last two years. ‘Current approaches to managing the risks posed by pollution and toxic substances are clearly failing, resulting in widespread violations of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment,’ states the report to be presented at a forthcoming meeting of the UN Human Rights Council. Worldwide and in Nepal, state priorities in favour of revenue and industry over the health of citizens is the main reason for worsening pollution. Only urgent policy level interventions can set things right, and for that there needs to be public pressure on candidates for local and national governments during this year’s elections in Nepal. A survey in this paper ahead of the 2017 elections showed ‘air pollution’ topping the list of concerns of Kathmandu citizens — even ahead of water supply, health, education and inflation (*see graph above*). Air pollution in Kathmandu has gotten much worse since then. Says researcher Bhupendra Das: “Air pollution is no more a mere environmental and health crisis, it is a political issue and must be treated as such.”

BACKSIDE Yankee go home. (Take us with you.)

For those of us who devour dish-information for current affairs, it is now looking like Nepal is about to declare war on the United States. Forget the Russians massing troops on the Ukraine border, the media should note that Nepal is fully mobilised to deploy the country’s entire arsenal and urinal to taken the Americans head-on. Never in history since we went to war against the East India Company and lost half the country have Nepalis faced such an existential threat. It is time for all patriots who did not get their DV lottery to take revenge. There are many retaliatory steps we can take against the Millennial Challenge. The Ass, in the ultra-national interest, has come up with a top secret highly classified list of options, and will divulge it below if you take a solemn oath not to go around blurting it out to anyone.

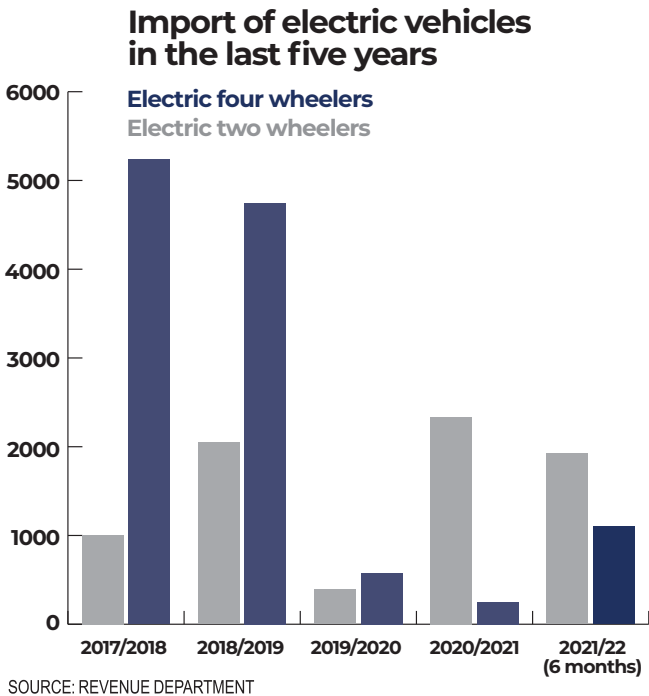


- ★ The Americans are eyeing our uranium deposits in Mustang, and the MCC is a ruse to mine it. Nepal should therefore get its centrifuges spinning to enrich plutonium to build our own nuclear deterrent.
- ★ Atom bums are useless without a missile delivery system, so we must install those warheads on locally-manufactured leather cannons that spread such terror among Company soldiers at Nalapani in 1814.
- ★ Nepalis will not be kicked around anymore by Sam Kaka. As Comrade Lotus flower once so eloquently put it, Nepal is a dynamite between two boulders. He co-signed that letter to the MCC to show that he will not take things lying down anymore — he will kowtow.
- ★ The Americans should not be allowed to improve our highways, it will make it easier for them to invade us. Our defence strategy is to keep our roads in such a poor state that they will stop American tanks in their tracks. In a military exercise last week, a Bailey bridge over the Arun collapsed, proving that this strategy works brilliantly.
- ★ Electric power comes out of the barrel of a gun.
- ★ We cannot accept the \$500 million MCC grant because if we do, the Americans may want to give us an even bigger aid package in future.
- ★ The MCC compact says disputes will be decided at an international arbitration court. We cannot allow that. Nepal’s courts must prevail because we have no rule of law.
- ★ Can’t trust the Nepali Congress because it is named after the American Congress.
- ★ Since India has banned the export of lab animals, the Americans want to use the MCC to kidnap our monkeys.
- ★ How can we support a project that has to be completed in 5 years? Like Pokhara International Airport and Melamchi, we need at least 40 years.
- ★ Yankee, go home!
(And Take us with you.)

, but conditions apply

favoring electric buses, nothing happens,” rues Sundar Yayat’s Thapa. Environmentalist Bhusan Tuladhar, who is also with Sajha Yatayat, says the government’s current policy on electric vehicles is positive but inadequate: “Private petroleum cars will be gradually replaced by electric vehicles. But it is more important to replace diesel-powered buses with electric ones. That should be our priority.” He argues that private investors will not invest more on electric buses if the current customs and other policies are not revised. “If we really want to promote electric public transport, we need to provide additional tax rebates and other facilities. Other countries, including India, have offered similar concessions,” he says. “Electric public transport will have a direct impact on public health by reducing vehicular emission and air pollution.” Bishwas Gauchan of Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) says that the existing policy of providing tax exemption on electric vehicles is itself lopsided. “Tax exemption should be for public vehicles, not private ones,” he says. Since big buses, taxis and two-wheelers are responsible for more of the carbon emissions as they travel more distances, they should be prioritised in government policies. “There is no need to rush tax exemptions for private electric vehicles to the detriment of the economy,” says Gauchan. Tuladhar also agrees that two-wheelers which make up about 80% of vehicles in the country and a major emitter of poisonous carbon monoxide, should be prioritised. He argues that taxes and other benefits should be

provided to electric two-wheelers to reduce pollution and carbon emission. According to the Economic Survey 2021, two-wheelers account for 79.3% of the 3.987 million vehicles registered by February 2021. The Delhi state government in India has introduced a policy that when delivery companies buy new vehicles, a certain percentage of them should be electric. “Even in Nepal, policies targeting electric two-wheelers need to be put forward. Additional concessions are needed to promote electric two wheelers,” says Tuladhar. NEVA’s Nawaraj Poudel argues that due to the high prices, complex geographical location of Nepal and lack of charging stations, electric two-wheelers have not been able to compete with petroleum ones. Although imports of electric motorcycles and scooters have tripled since last year, this is far less than the number of petroleum two-wheelers. Around 300,000 new two-wheelers are added to the roads of Nepal every year. More than a dozen brands of electric two-wheelers are currently sold in Nepal. Sanjeev Shilpakar, director of E-Motors at Yoma which sells TailG two-wheelers, says that the new Rs10,000 road development fee has discouraged consumers. “In addition to the road development fee, consumers still need to pay 40% tax under various names,” he says. Another reason that electric two-wheelers have failed to gain traction in the market may also be attributed to their higher cost. The price of electric two-wheelers in Nepal is much higher than the international market since the dealers keep a higher margin. Shilpakar refutes this, saying that the transportation cost itself is higher and the bikes have to be modified to fit Nepal’s terrain. He adds, “Although the cost price of electric two-wheelers is higher than petroleum ones, the operating cost is definitely lower.”





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