Inside

Using power wisely

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Using power wisely

Like a mirage, the nearer we get to Parliament’s ratification of a $500 million US-funded infrastructure project, the better it looks, even as the reality of it fades. Yet, Malindla played deft diplomacy, giving the impression that India is a significant actor in the region, which is enough to keep the flow of aid going. However, it seems to be a case of the emperor's new clothes, as the reality of the project is muted by the hype.

After the most recent parliamentary meeting, it seemed that the Malindla government is on the right track. However, the opposition is not buying it and has called for a more rigorous investigation of the project. The opposition is concerned about the project's cost and its potential impact on the environment. They argue that the project is not in the best interest of the country and that it will only benefit a few.

The project is expected to cost $1 billion and will involve the construction of a new airport and a new road network. However, the opposition questions whether the project is necessary and whether it will actually benefit the people. They point out that the government has not consulted with the people and that the project has not been properly planned.

In response, the government has claimed that the project is necessary and that it will bring economic benefits to the country. They argue that the project will create jobs and boost the economy. However, the opposition is skeptical and believes that the project is a waste of money.

The project is expected to be completed in 2025 and will be funded by a combination of foreign aid and domestic funds. The government has already signed a number of agreements with foreign countries to secure the funding for the project.

In conclusion, the Malindla government's efforts to use power wisely are not convincing. The opposition is not buying it and is calling for a more rigorous investigation of the project. The government needs to be more transparent and open about the project's cost and its potential impact on the environment.

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Remittance Economy

Nepal's remittance economy, the lifeblood of many families, has been a boon for the economy. However, it is not without its problems. The government has been trying to find ways to reduce the cost of remittances and make it easier for families to send money home.

In 2002, the government introduced a new system for remittances that allowed families to send money home more quickly and at a lower cost. The system was called the "Remittance System" and it was designed to make it easier for families to send money home.

Since then, the remittance system has become more popular and more families are using it. However, there are still some problems. The cost of remittances is still high and families often have to pay extra fees to send money home.

The government is working to address these problems and make the remittance system even more popular. They are considering ways to reduce the cost of remittances and make it easier for families to send money home.

The remittance system has been a major success and has helped many families in Nepal. However, there is still work to be done to make it even more popular and accessible for all families.

Even more important, it is important to remember that the remittance system is only one part of the economy. The government needs to work on other economic issues to help families in Nepal.

What is the remittance system?

The remittance system is a system designed to make it easier for families to send money home. It was introduced in 2002 and has been a success.

How does it work?

Families can send money home using the remittance system. They can do this through a bank or through a money transfer service.

What is the cost?

The cost of remittances is still high and families often have to pay extra fees to send money home.

What else is the government doing?

The government is working to reduce the cost of remittances and make it easier for families to send money home. They are considering ways to do this.

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TIME TO MEET AGAIN: BUCHAREST

Have a healthy journey with all precautions taken down to the smallest detail for your in-flight safety.
DIASPORA DIARIES

"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 allowed me to deliver legal letters and messages. His salary was not enough to support our family, so as a 1986 he went to Saudi Arabia where he found a job as a gardener, working outside in the heart of the city.

We communicated in letters and if he did not hear from him for over two months, my mother would start crying. The letters my siblings and I wrote him were formal, in a style they taught us in school. They all started with “Sr. Pujantra Bhatta, Shantab Daradawal (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 had a much better job, I would have had opportunities for promotion. But there were no promotions for gardener like us. This is why it is important that you study. I am working hard so that you can study hard.”

When my father turned 50, I decided it was time to bring him back from Saudi Arabia. He had worked very hard, and it was my turn to step up. My father came back, passed on the foreign employment burden to me in 2004. I left for Kuwait to work as a security guard. The heat was oppressive and the work was too much. Over a period of six months, one of my colleagues went back to Saudi Arabia one by one, either because they were caught in the hot weather or they got tired and left. But as long as the heat was not too bad, I 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 Patroling Supervisor to Operation Supervisor and finally 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 sunny, donated fare for Rs 1000 a month. I used to be drenched in sweat and danger 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 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 had a bus to go overseas, we got on as manpower agents. We pleaded with them to connect us with jobs, we call or message them desperately. But the minute we got on the plane, we start scaling them.

If a major 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 all over the world.

My financial strength has spilled over into helping those associated with me.

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 retuming anytime soon. I explored opportunities in the hotel and restaurant line for back up. My 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 evermore. All because of foreign employment.

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 we need to actively go out and seek them.

I am living in Jordan now. I have decided to come home and bring joy. But he brought back tears and grief. He wrote a poignant letter about a putting gift.

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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 line 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 lot of debate in Nepal’s cybersphere and political arena that is spilling over into the streets. The points of view are highly charged and polarised. We left logic behind a long time ago—now are now debating on emotion and rhetoric.

When King Mahendra wanted the Chinese to build the Arakha Highway connecting Kathmandu to Dhaus 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’

Anuks Rajabhindi

In 2017, I had just started my undergraduate studies at Peking University in Beijing. One of my Chinese classmates asked me why the Nepalese 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 response 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 decades.

In fact, my colleague’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 Fanzhao stated that the rebels had ‘stayed’ 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 an article titled “Increasingly Active Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)”, which described the Maoists as being sectarian, unable to create unity within the party or 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 initiated to recognise it ‘because of their association with international terrorist organizations’.

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 feared with skepticism and disdain, was replaced with a narrative that improved Mao’s own image.

Prachanda (Pushpa Kamal Dahal) was suddenly seen as a trailblazer 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
himself was firmly opposed to using ‘Masism’ as a political label for his ideology.

In a conversation with Wang Buxing, a senior reporter of CPC, Mao said: “Masism 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 Masism. ‘Masism’ 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 have matured as a system of thought. It’s not modern, 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 Laoshe University’s Social Sciences journal. The student defined ‘Maoism’ as the suffix of the party’s name, and was confused by Mao’s 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 pessimism and thus 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 further suggested that if Nepal’s Maoists wanted to adhere to the revolutionary line in the future, they must adopt the basic principles of being a proletariat 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 first 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 2017 even 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. But he would do so only once and after that lay low, be a member of the Party Central Committee and “slowly retire, read, write and do research”. A year later, this is what Maoist swept the election to the Constituent Assembly, and Dahal was elected as its prime minister. Two years later, he became Nepal’s prime minister for the second time.

By 2008, there were articles and reports introducing Dahal and stories of his revolution. In a similar interview article featured in China Daily, Dahal confessed that he was excited about how China dealt with Pakistan. He added, “If China could help Pakistan, it will be a blessing for the Nepalese people.”

The interviewer was impressed by Dahal’s simple lifestyle in Kathmandu, and the devotion of the people for him. He related 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 legacy. K P Oli, on the other hand, has been criticized in the Chinese media for allowing the split in the NCP and the UML.

To be sure, Dahal has not treated 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 face.

Dahal’s present predicament with the MCC, in Nepal could either further improve or completely ruin his stature in China. State media here has denounced Dahal and for recent expose secret letter to the MCC, but it was largely ignored.

Dahal belongs to the Marxist 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.

An expression used by Chinese politico at the least amount, Beijing University of China.
**PROJECTED AIR QUALITY INDEX**

- **Kathmandu**
- **Our Pick**
- **Global Citizenship Workshop**
- **Lakure Bhanjyang Hike**
- **Simon Soon**
- **Magical Friday**

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**DOMESTIC AGENCIES**

- **Taza Treats**
- **Bajeiko Sekawa**
- **Gangnam Galbi Barbecue**
- **Achaar Ghar**

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**WEEKEND WEATHER**

- **Mountain Glory Forest Resort**
- **Dhulikhel Mountain Resort**
- **Megahaul Serai**

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**OUR PICK**

- **The Sinderwind**

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**AIR QUALITY INDEX**

- **In the Himalaya Hotel Lodge**
- **Newa Chen**

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**DINING**

- **Turkish Kebabs**
- **Pizza Hub**

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**EVENTS**

- **Magical Friday**
- **Simon Soon**
- **Lakure Bhanjyang Hike**

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**ONLINE ARCHIVES**

- **Ridiculous History**
- **Kahoot!**
- **Comic Library**

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**GETAWAY**

- **Dhulikhel Mountain Resort**
- **Mountain Glory Forest Resort**
- **Megahaul Serai**

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**About Town**

- **Weekend Weather**
- **Air Quality Index**
- **Our Pick**

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**EVENING**

- **The Very Best of German Eyeengineering**
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, Nandupal Mall, 35, left home in Thandha, 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 Nandupal went missing, Nagma’s grandmother, Senu 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 Nepal Army officials and holding protests every day in Matigur. One day, she was physically assaulted by police during a protest. 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,” Nagma says. “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 Chauk 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 Katra Rajya Campus for a degree in journalism. But before long, her only remaining support, her grandmother, died leaving her in charge of raising her younger sister Swatikaa. 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 Disappeared Persons Committee started to wane.

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 she sold oranges of the family paying for both her and Swatikaa’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 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 organization 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 fear of the 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.

Sushma Kakal Dehak looked after only his people after his father was missing. 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.”

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 mechanisms.

Skills Expected

Leadership, project management, facilitation and presentation, staff management, communication and networking, financial management, fund-raising 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 quality and growth.

Write grants and raise funds for meaningful programs.

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

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

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 Himalayas and up to Kathmandu Valley.

It was not just the open burning in Haryana and Punjab but also weather conditions that allowed for smoke concentrations in the southern plains to be transported to Kathmandu and higher elevations, says climate scientist Bhum Poughare, one of the authors of the recent paper in the journal Atmospheric Pollution Research.

Theветmitted main role 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 prioritizing air pollution and mitigate its impact on public health,” adds Poughare, 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 1980 to 2018.

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

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**Nepal goes electric,**

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 245 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 Nawar Das Adhikari of the Nepal Energy Association (NEVA). However, there is a 50% cash margin threshold for diesel and petrol cars, but there is no such barrier 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, Rs.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 higher 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.

“The cost of electric vehicles is a real issue,” says Sunil Saran, a car dealer in Kathmandu. “It is not possible to buy electric vehicles off the shelf right now,” says Dhruva Shaligram, Executive Director of the Electric Vehicle Association Nepal. “The shortage of chips has slowed vehicle production. And this has also affected India and Nepal.”

Among 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 Yutano, owner of 20 Chinese electric buses, but they have been stuck at the Bhairahawa customs checkpost 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 15% VAT and 1% tax, so we are negotiating,” says Bhimsen Shaligram, Executive Director of Sundar Yutano. “Apart from the taxes, the number plate charge and other fees further 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 Rs9 million each.

“If the government scraps the road tax for electric buses, the cost will come down by Rs1.5 million,” says Thapa. “We will sell 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 rates 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 changes in policies...
What are your priority issues in Kathmandu?

Pre-election survey in 2017

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were the main culprits for pollution.

"We found that regular servicing and maintenance of vehicles can reduce pollution by up to 66% and this figure is even higher, at 66% for petrol-run automobiles," says Ek profundin 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 India in 2017, 30% of all new passenger car sales and 20% of public transport vehicles will be battery-powered by 2030, but government policy does not reflect this. Presently, while private electric SUVs get a tax rebate, it is direct buses that are subsidised, while electric ones cost five times more because of high custom duties 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 fuel cells, but Nepal’s policies do not reflect its Glasgow goals.

As a result, air pollution in Nepal’s cities is getting worse and it 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 4,140 deaths across the country in 2018, 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 causes 4 million premature deaths annually, much more than the Covid-19 pandemic that has claimed 5.6 million lives in the last two years.

"Current approaches to managing the risks posed by pollution and substances are clearly failing, resulting in widespread violations of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment," the study 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.

A survey in this paper ahead of the 2017 elections showed ‘air pollution’ topping the list of concerns of Kathmandu’s citizens above even of water supply, health, education and inflation. Air pollution in Kathmandu has gotten much worse since then.

Says researcher Bhupendra Das: "Air pollution is no more a more environmental and health crisis, it is a political issue and must be treated as such."
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