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JIYAL SAH

Plain speaking

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

Kanu says he is not sure if he will vote in local elections on 14 May if Madhesi parties boycott it. However, he does not support another agitation. The last one last year ruined his business.

Back in Kathmandu, talks between the government and the Madhesi Front were deadlocked again on Wednesday. Tarai-centric parties renewed threats to disrupt elections in the plains if the constitution is not amended first.

Birganj professor Lalan Dubedi says: "The common people here are not that concerned about the amendment. But they will not

vote if there is fear of violence."

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

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

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

RPP Chair Kamal Thapa told PM Dahal his party will not support the amendment. Dahal

then asked Madhesi leaders to put the amendment bill on hold and vote on it after local elections in May. Madhesi leaders refused.

"The amendment is just an excuse to avoid elections," says UML Chief Whip Bhanubhakta Dhakal. "Madhesi parties will find

LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND
GUEST EDITORIAL
BY SANGITA THEBE LIMBU
PAGE 2

another excuse if the Constitution is amended. There should be elections with or without them."

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

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

Om Astha Rai and Jiyalal Sah in Birganj

PODCASTERS

Women journalists break the sound barrier and stream directly to audiences through the Net.

PAGE 7



In joy and in sorrow

Nepali Times marks International Women's Day by featuring the husbands of Nepal's first female Chief Justice, a hard-hitting radio journalist, and a former Miss Nepal to show how their support gave them the freedom to fly.

PAGE 8-9

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GUEST EDITORIAL
SANGITA THEBE LIMBU

Leave no one behind

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

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

However, the achievements are unevenly distributed with the outcomes largely

and transformative outcomes? This is where addressing gender disparities in the labour market becomes crucial. Gender equality cannot be achieved without women's economic empowerment, which is based on the notion of women having not only skills and resources to advance economically but also decision-making power and control over their economic resources.

According to the Annual Household Survey 75% of Nepali women are in the labour force but they hold just 0.7% of public sector jobs whereas around 60% of employed women work in agriculture. Gendered hierarchies within the informal economy often result in men dominating more remunerative jobs, while women are over-represented in the least secure and low-paid jobs at the bottom as home-based and family workers.

The UN Women report shows that women who do the majority of unpaid care work are denied equal pay for work of equal value, and are less likely than men to receive a pension. The gender pay gap in Nepal is wide with women earning 40.5% less than men.



PAUL JEFFREY

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

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

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

But the other question is how do we translate values of diversity, inclusion, progressive laws and policies into tangible



Sangita Thebe Limbu
is Gender Technical Analyst at Social Development Direct.

Nepali Times.com

ONLINE VIDEOS



Go to *Nepali Times* Online to watch the reinstatement this week at Patan Darbar Square of the gilt statue of Yognarendra Malla that was toppled in the 2015 earthquake. The bronze figure includes the king's two queens, a guardian serpent with a bird perched on it, and was restored by the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust and the Department of Archaeology.

TUNE IN



THE SPEED OF SOUND

Listen to an online podcast on podcasting in Nepal, and how women journalists are breaking the sound barrier in the digital medium. Podcasters Sabeena Karki, Bhrikuti Rai and Itisha Giri talk about the challenges of online audio and opportunities.



MOST WATCHED



Nepali Times marked Valentine's Day last month with the remarkable love story of a man who donated one of his kidneys to his ailing wife. The video was very popular online and generated 83,000 views, 518 shares and 120 comments on Facebook. If you missed it, watch the video again to see the couple tell their emotional story of selfless compassion.

DIVERSE MADHESIS

Kanak Mani Dixit's article ignores geopolitics ('Who is the Madhesi subaltern?', #847). It also ignores that Madhesis are not a homogeneous community, given the differences between them in terms of language, religion, class, and caste, and also the differences between indigenous inhabitants and Indian immigrants.

K K Sharma

AMBASSADORIAL POLITICS

If the proposed ambassadors are crooks and corrupt, then the leaders who backed them must be as well ('Let's have more amb-ass-odours', the Ass, #847). We are the ones who selected those politicians. So we have to blame no one but ourselves.

Gyurme Dondup

KEEP IT LOCAL

Green Growth is a really good initiative, keep it local and stop imports ('Of local, for local, buy local', Smriti Basnet, #847).

Gary Barnett

CORRECTION

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

WHAT'S TRENDING



Of local, for local, buy local

by Smriti Basnet

Read about Green Growth, a new online business that reduces the carbon footprint of urban consumers by extending the digital footprint of farmers. Watch the video to learn how they do it.

Most reached on Facebook
(17,201 people reached)

Most shared on Facebook
(29 shares)

Studying cat scat

by Sonam Tashi lama

Snow leopards are struggling against extinction but the good news is there is a way out. Learn more about how analysis of snow leopard droppings gives scientists clues on how to protect them.

Most popular on Twitter
(34 retweets, 93 likes)

Who is the Madhesi subaltern?

by Kanak Mani Dixit

Who represents the voice of the Madhesi masses, given the preponderance of the socio-economic-cultural elites at the forefront in challenging the new Constitution?

Most visited online page

Most commented

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times@nepalitimes
Green growth: connecting #Nepali farmers and consumers through the net. [@smriti_basnet](http://bit.ly/217Zajr)

UNDP in Nepal@UNDPNepal
Good move: Innovative new start-up sources #homegrown #organic produce directly from farmers & sells them to urban consumers via online shop

Ganga Thapa@GulmiGanga
Wow that's a gr8 news as we don't have to struggle to get organic products

Nepali Times@nepalitimes
After 2 decades, #Nepal is finally holding polls for 34,203 representatives in 719 municipalities, village councils <http://bit.ly/2lOmbMw>

Ed Douglas@calmandfearless
Local elections in Nepal is a piece of good news but choppy political waters ahead.

Nepali Times@nepalitimes
Anyone who defines Madhesis as 'Nepalis of Indian origin' must attend re-education camp writes @KanakManiDixit <http://bit.ly/2lyftHjV>

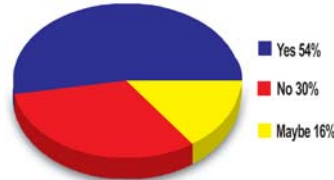
Hanna Ruszczyk@HRuszczyk
Politics caste ethnicity. How much longer can a majority be ignored?



Weekly Internet Poll #848

Q. Are you casting your vote in local elections in May?

Total votes: 342



Weekly Internet Poll #849
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you support President Donald Trump's policy on immigration?



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Cloud with a dark lining

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

OM ASTHA RAI

At the end of his turbulent three-year tenure as India's ambassador to Nepal Ranjit Rae told editors at a farewell reception last week that New Delhi had not been given due recognition for ending load-shedding.

Rae reportedly rued that the new Managing Director of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) Kulman Ghising was getting all the credit.

When one of the editors tweeted this, the outgoing Indian envoy was slammed on social media for implying that it was charity. 'Nepal paying for the power,' read one tweet.

However, it appears to be true that India has gone out of its way to offer help with transmission lines that had been delayed for years, so the power could be imported. One NEA source told *Nepali Times* that India has been unusually accommodating after Pushpa Kamal Dahal became Prime Minister in August last year.

"Ending load-shedding would not be possible in the dry season unless the transmission lines had been completed to import power," he said, adding that although Ghising deserved credit for cutting off dedicated feeders to industries and controlling leakage it would



COST OF POWER	
This dry season, NEA is importing more electricity from India than is produced within Nepal. Most of the Indian electricity costs Rs 8.50 per unit, whereas within Nepal NEA buys much of its power at Rs 6 per unit.	
12 NOVEMBER 2016	23 FEBURARY 2017
Power import from India	Power import from India
3,300 MWh	8,530 MWh
Domestic generation	Domestic generation
13,260 MWh (7,540 by NEA and 5,720 by private producers)	7,920 MWh (4,600 by NEA and 3,320 by private power producers)

not have been sufficient to end load-shedding in the dry season.

Ghising would have had to reimpose power rationing if the 400 KV Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur transmission line had not been completed in order to import power from India to meet this dry season's shortfall.

NEA was therefore able to buy 400 MW from India, up from 250 MW last year. Once two more 132 KV cross-border lines (Kusaha-Kataiya and Raxaul-Parwanipur) are completed later this year, Nepal can import even more power from India if needed.

Power imports from India are temporary to tide over the current supply deficit, and the same transmission lines can in future be used to export Nepal's surplus power to India. But for that Nepal would have to build several high dams to store monsoon water to generate sufficient electricity during the dry season to keep up with demand.

Some experts say that relying on India for electricity is a bad idea because besides being dependent on petroleum, Nepal

is now also relying on power imports from India.

Former water resource minister Dipak Gyawali says Nepal should have learnt its lesson on being self-sufficient in energy after the Indian blockade last year, but it has not.

"I would have preferred to suffer from load-shedding rather than handing over the key to the main switch of our electricity supply to India," he said.

Gyawali suggests three ways to get out of this trap: encourage Nepal's independent

Carbon footprint

Till five months ago electricity supply from the mains may have been rationed, but at least we knew it was clean energy from hydropower.

Nepal now has 24-hour electricity, but half of that is from thermal power plants in India that burn dirty coal. Every time you switch on the lights, remember: Nepal's carbon footprint just doubled.

"We know it is dirty thermal electricity, but we badly need it, otherwise we have to bring back load-shedding," Hitendra Dev Shakya of NEA's System Planning Division told *Nepali Times*.

Nepal's annual per capita emission of carbon is 0.13 tons (the United States is 17 tons) but it is now going up significantly. Nepal's moral high ground in climate negotiations is going to be much more muted.

Climate analyst Manjeet Dhakal says: "China argues that it has high carbon emissions because it is burning fossil fuels to manufacture products for the global market. India might use the same argument and claim that it is burning coal to supply electricity to Nepal."

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

power producers to generate more electricity, control leakage by expanding the network of community electricity users and switch to solar energy with reverse metering. 🇳🇵

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Funding farmers

NIC Asia Bank has rolled out loans for deprived communities in Attariya, Kailali.

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

Win win

Pashupati Paints unveiled names of the winners of its Dasain-Tihar campaign this week. For the first winner, the company

has announced a 350cc Royal Enfield bike, while the other five winners are to be presented with phones, fridges, washing machines, gold and silver.

Got your back

On the occasion of International Wheelchair Day, Standard Chartered Bank Nepal handed over 20 units of wheelchairs and 25 pairs of crutches to Nepal Disabled Association. The support

the five that were given, two toilets are for men, two for women and one for disabled.

New models

Huawei recently launched its new flagship products, Huawei P10 and P10 Plus in MWC 2017 Barcelona. With an upgraded

design and equipped with Leica as its front camera, the two models will be launched in Nepal soon.

In toilets we trust

Zonta Club Kathmandu handed over five toilets designed with Sulabh technology to Pashupati Area Development Trust. In

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JOHNNIE WALKER
KEEP WALKING

The crags and rocks were perilously close to the wing tips as our Pilatus Porter aircraft spiralled downwards towards the tiny landing strip clinging to the remote Himalayan hillside. I could see



SO FAR SO GOOD
Lisa Choegyal

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

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

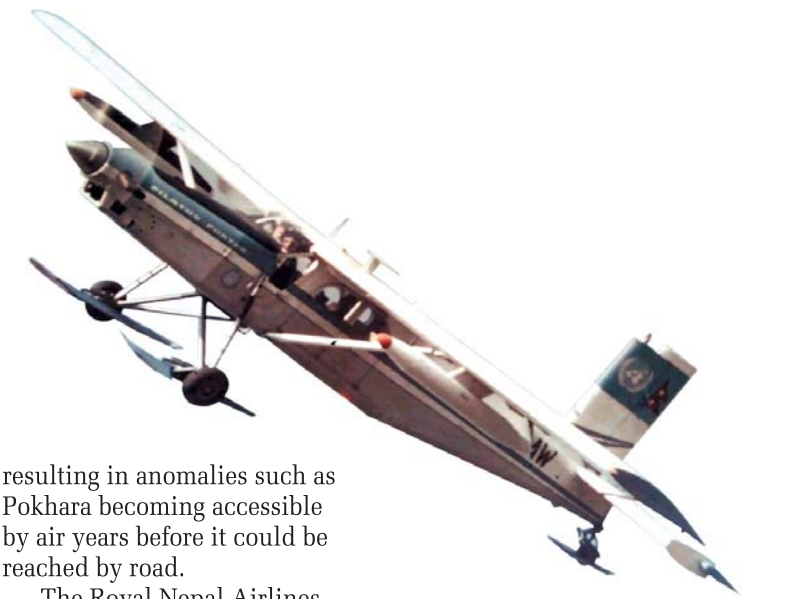


the country, and the only time I ever flew with him.

Given the tortuous terrain, air transport was crucial to Nepal's early development and tourism. Horses or mules and even elephants were options in some parts of the country, but walking was the norm. Only in 1956 did the Tribhuvan Rajpath link Kathmandu with the outside world. The few vehicles in Kathmandu Valley before that were carried in an epic effort by porters along the historic trade route over the Chandragiri Pass to Thankot. The rugged topography hindered the road network,

Never fly into clouds

Those wonderful Pilatus Porter pilots and their flying machines



resulting in anomalies such as Pokhara becoming accessible by air years before it could be reached by road.

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

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

Hardy and Emil both trained the first Nepali pilots, and Hardy helped develop some 40 STOL airfields over the 20 years that he flew in Nepal from the mid-1960s. He was my neighbour in Sanepa, drove a stylish concave-roofed Mercedes sports car, and despite his troubled soul and irascible nature I adored him. He used to say, in a strong Swiss

German accent, that he preferred flying cargo because it "didn't ask bloody stupid questions".

Hardy did not return my passion, but tolerated me around his blazing central fireplace, usually with a drink and cigarette in hand, and classical music blasting. I worried he was so skinny – he weighed 59 kg – and one evening I hugged him too hard, breaking one of his ribs. Hardy's love was reserved for music, opera and art. He selected flying over a career as a tenor, and of course for Nepal and his beloved mountains. He told me stories of amazed Nepali villagers in remote regions leaving hay under the nose of the aircraft in case it got hungry overnight, and closely inspecting the wings for feathers.

Both pilots were proud of their Swiss aircraft and enjoyed demonstrating its limits. When told by the control tower that the wind was too strong, Hardy once landed his Pilatus sideways across the runway at Kathmandu airport. Emil landed on Tundikhel, just to prove it was possible. After the tragic crash that killed Louise Hillary, Sir Edmund's first wife, Emil showed it was possible to take off and land even with jammed wing flaps. It was Emil who flew me back from the Meghauli airstrip after the Twin Otter I was in had "landed badly" in 1978, almost killing us all. But that is another story. 🇨🇭

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The dry spell is expected to continue in the midhills and Tarai into the weekend and beyond with approaching westerly fronts veering off to the north. There will be some snowfall driven by high afternoon winds in the higher mountains, but the rest of the country will see passing clouds and some cloud buildup, but not by way of rain. The thick haze from the plains will continue to cover Nepal, filtering the sunshine and keeping the maxima in the low 20s. The minima in Kathmandu will climb into the double digits.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
22° 10°	23° 11°	22° 9°

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BROADCASTING PODCASTING

Women
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the sound barrier
by streaming
directly to
audiences through
the Internet



SAHINA SHRESTHA

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

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

"Audio is the fastest medium to disseminate information," says Sabeena Karki, former RJ and founder of Sabscast, who sees a vibrant future for the channel with the spread of smartphones and mobile Internet.

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

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

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

Karki was initially worried whether she would get appointments and interviews as a

freelancer. But after her popular podcast of a chat with former King Gyanendra (pictured above, right) there was no looking back. In less than a year, Sabscast has regular listeners in Nepal, the US and the Gulf.

She has sponsors for her show 'Yo maya bhanne chij khai kasto kasto' and advertising has started flooding in. Karki says she did not get into podcasting to earn money, and was only following her passion and experimenting with a new medium.

"The beauty of podcasting is that you don't require fancy equipment, just a basic recording

device and knowledge of audio editing," Karki explains.

Bhrikuti Rai and Itisha Giri (above, left) are also podcast hosts of *BojuBajai*, which has a light-hearted take on serious issues of gender. In a studio in Jawalakhel, Rai sets up her laptop and connects via Skype to her co-host Giri in Spain to record their episodes.

Nine months since the launch *BojuBajai* has been gaining popularity, and their first episode 'Bhalu and Whores' has been streamed more than 8,000 times on the channel's SoundCloud account.

"Podcast is a very liberating medium, there are no other

distractions. Also not being affiliated to any organisation, we have complete control over our content and we can change our format and style depending on what the pressing issue is, allowing us to use our individuality to shape and spark a conversation that we think is important," says Giri.

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

"We went into it without any expectations but the response

has been huge. We don't just get instantaneous feedback, but listeners suggest issues they think we should cover," says Rai.

Karki, Rai and Giri all agree that their main challenge is technical know-how of listeners, or the lack of it. Says Rai, "We still have to explain what podcast is and how people can listen to it. But with time I am sure the medium will grow given the love Nepalis have for audio." 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Listen to Sabeena Karki, Bhrikuti Rai and Itisha Giri talk about podcasting in Nepal.



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In joy and in so

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



SHAHIDULALAM

Durga Subedi

At 70, Durga Subedi is still known more as Nepal's most famous hijacker than the husband of the country's first female Chief Justice, Sushila Karki.

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

On 10 June 1973, when he was just 27, Subedi and other Nepali Congress activists commandeered a Twin Otter of Royal Nepal Airlines shortly after it took off from Biratnagar, forced it to land in Forbesganj of Bihar and made off with Rs 3 million in Indian currency (worth 100 times that amount today) to fund the NC pro-democracy movement in exile.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Binita Dahal



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Riyaz Shrestha

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

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

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

They first met in the United States in 2010 when he was at university. They fell in love and tied the

inter-ethnic knot two years later. He is a Newar, and Subba is herself an offspring of an inter-ethnic marriage between a Brahmin and Limbu.

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

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

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

Nepali society is changing, but tradition and culture are stronger than education and awareness, and are still barriers to women's freedom and for gender equality, Shrestha says.

"She is more capable than me but I always take that as a compliment. For a successful conjugal life one needs to remain free from ego irrespective of gender," he says with conviction.

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

Shreejana Shrestha



GOPEN RAI



SONIA AWALE

On her first day back to work after maternity leave in 2009, Rama Parajuli spent 10 hours preparing a radio program for BBC Nepali Service. Her husband Pratyoush Onta was home, feeding their one-year-old son and changing his diapers.

Onta, a historian and editor with Martin Chautari, didn't just backstop Parajuli as the couple raised their two sons, but has been a source of constant

encouragement for her professional career.

"As an academic I have tried to provide her intellectual support. This entails discussing ideas, providing copies of relevant writings and linking her with people she might want to talk with," says Onta. "But then I have been doing this at my office and for everyone who has asked for such help from me. So it just feels like an extension of my work."

Onta doesn't consider taking care of the children in

Pratyoush Onta

absence of his wife anything extraordinary and insists it is a story of most middle-class urban couples today.

"He has this amazing ability to multi-task, he can edit while holding the baby," Parajuli says, "whenever I am not around he takes care of everything in the household." She admits she is not of much help to Onta, but says he is her sounding board for story ideas for the BBC.

Onta studied economics in Brandeis University in the US but later found his true passion and went on to do a PhD in history from the University of Pennsylvania in 1996. That was also the year he first met his wife-to-be.

Parajuli was working at *Kantipur* and Onta was a contributing editor at *Himal* and trying to bridge the gap between journalists and academia. That was when they met, and got married two years later.

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

"She made many professional sacrifices in the beginning of our marriage, but later it was me who took leave from my job to look after our son," recalls Onta, who himself accompanied Parajuli to the UK when she got a Chevening Scholarship to do her masters.

In the UK Onta was a fulltime house husband

preparing breakfast and snacks, dropping and fetching their son from school and baking pancakes on weekends. But he also got to do what he liked best: spend time in the library while his son dozed in the stroller.

Back in Nepal, after their second son was born, Onta started taking on more responsibilities at home.

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

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

However, he thinks patriarchy in Nepali society allows men to get away with a lot. "In Nepal men do little but get or try to take too much credit," he says, and jokes: "I'm afraid it's the same with me here."

Sonia Awale



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EVENTS

Women's Day,

Mark this day dedicated to women by celebrating their success and struggles.
8 March

**Vagina Monologues,**

Hear out female voices on sex, relationships and violence against women in the Women's Day fundraiser show.
8 March, 7 pm onwards, Trisara, Lajimpat, Rs 2000 (includes buffet dinner), 9841226959

Squat competition,

Register to participate in the 2nd Interclub women's squat competition organised by Jasmine Fitness and Spa on the occasion of Women's Day.
7 & 8 March, Jasmine Fitness and Spa, Tripureswor, (01) 4117115

Women run,

Jog or walk for women empowerment in this run organised to mark the International Women's Day.
4 March, 7 am onwards, Jawalakhel Football Ground

**Monday morning queries,**

Network, interact and learn together with other entrepreneurs, students and start-ups over coffee and baked delights.
6 March, 9 to 11 am, Bodhi Books and Bakes, Maharajganj, For registration: <http://www.clockb.com/>

**Capturing fashion,**

Learn the ropes of fashion photography with Sanjog Rai in a three-day workshop.
3 to 5 March, The Exhibit, Pulchok, Rs 6500, For registration: 9818138388, sanjog.photography@gmail.com

**Stupa to stupa,**

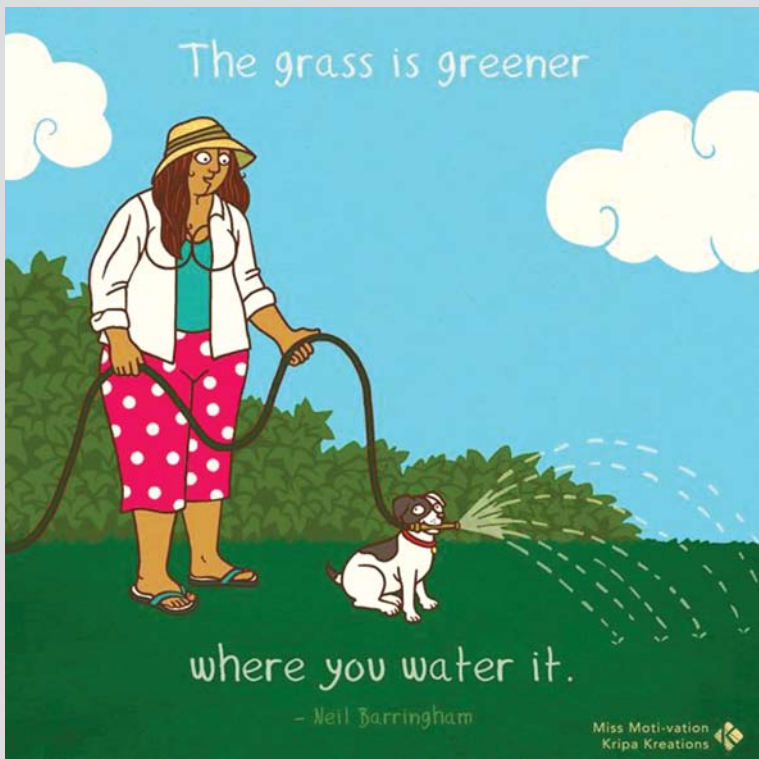
A 50km scenic trail run and hiking challenge that starts from Swayambhu stupa and ends at Boudhanath.
4 March, 6 am onwards, Swayambhu Stupa, Rs 3500 (for foreigners), Rs 2000 (for Indian nationals), Rs 1200 (for Nepalis) Rs 600 (for students), Register at: <http://register.trailrunningnepal.org/stupa/registration/>

Lords of slam,

Book your tickets to experience the magic of spoken word poetry by internationally acclaimed poets Phil Kaye and Sarah Kay.
6 March, 5 to 10 pm, International Club, Sanepa. Rs 750 (advance sale) and Rs 1,000 (door sale), <https://tinyurl.com/z9rxpv9>

**Ghumphir photography,**

View the best 50 photographs submitted to the online competition organised by Nepal Tourism Board and Nepalese in Photography.
3 to 5 March, 11 am to 5 pm, Nepal Tourism Board, Bhrikutimandap

**MISS MOTI-VATION****KRIPA JOSHI**

MUSIC

**Fusion night**

Spend a melodious evening listening to the Nepali fusion trio Kanta dAb dAb.
3 March, 8 pm onwards, House of Music, Thamel, Rs 300

Yaatra release,

The Midnight Riders will be launching its new album 'Yaatra'. Be part of the program and enjoy your Monday night.
6 March, 7 to 11 pm, Wicked Spoon Fork & Rock, Jhamsikhel, 9841461765, wickedspoonnepal@gmail.com

**Music festival,**

Be a part of this month-long festival and experience music in its entirety. Enjoy jazz, sarangi, reggae and many more genres.
1 to 31 March, Base Camp, Jhamsikhel, For more information: 9841226397, pareshkshrestha@gmail.com

Soothing sufi,

Listen to sufi melodies every Fridays and Saturdays.
Green Leaves Restaurant, Uttar Dhoka, Lajimpat, (01) 4433002

Night out with Chorus

Enjoy a soothing performance by Chorus band as they belt out covers of popular hits.
3 March, 7 to 10 pm, Ai-La Lounge, Kumaripati, (01) 5008681

DINING

**Gokarna Resort,**

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Every Saturday, Gokarna Forest Resort, Ranikunj, 12 to 3 pm, For more details: (01) 4451212

Hotel Shangri-la,

Enjoy a sumptuous brunch at Shambala Garden and Club Sundhara.
11 am to 3 pm, Hotel Shangri-La, Lajimpat, (01) 4412999, Rs 1,500 per person (includes shawarma and pasta)

**Vootoo,**

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Himalayan Peace and Wellness Center, Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha, (01)4370286, peace@wellness.com.np

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Nuwakot, (01)4422617

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Nepal's net foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows are the lowest in the region as well as among least developed countries (LDCs). The country received \$52 million net FDI in 2015, 0.1% of the amount that South Asia received and 0.13% of what LDCs received.



COMMENT

Shyamal K Shrestha

Least-developed countries like Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Haiti mobilised FDI worth \$169 million, \$2.2 billion, and \$109 million in 2015 respectively.

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

Although FDI has rebounded since 2009, the bulk of it has come mostly in energy, tourism and services, and not in manufacturing. The industrial sector shrank to 15.4% of GDP and manufacturing to 6.3% of GDP in 2015. Slow job creation has resulted in expansion of the informal economy and overseas job migration.

For the past two decades, Nepal failed to be part of global production networks while Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam attracted FDI in textiles and clothing, and moved steadily



GOPEN RAI

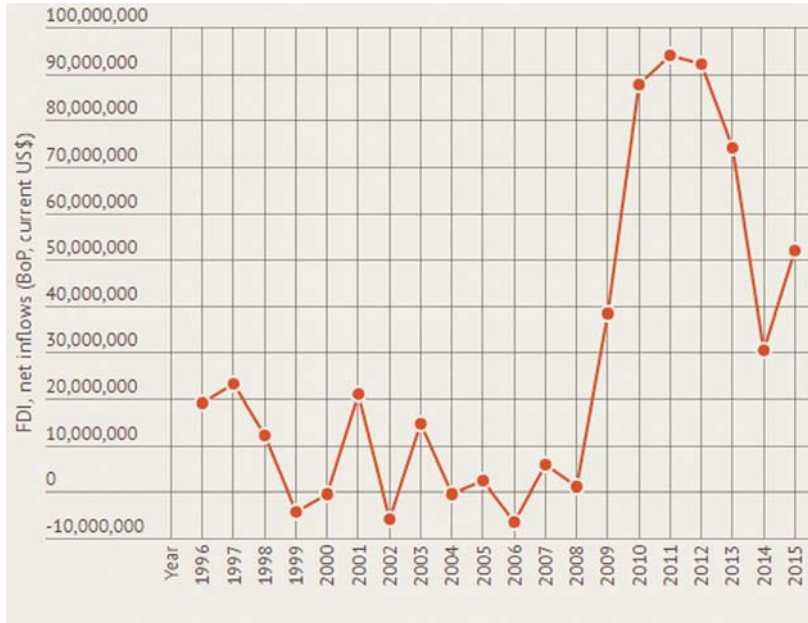
up the value chain. These countries also experienced rapid income and productivity growth for a mass of their industrial labor force. India and China, which currently dominate world manufacturing (accounting for 25% of global manufacturing) are upgrading to produce high-technology goods, including vehicles, machinery, machinery spare parts and smart phones by opening up these sectors to FDI.

Nepal must take stock of its own experience as well as draw upon that of its neighbors to mobilise greater FDI. The first litmus test is to institute an FDI friendly regime so all state agencies to coordinate effectively and welcome FDI as a general principle. A 'negative list' of industries and business in the government's proposed new FDI law might be valid from the viewpoint of protecting small

producers but would prevent those sectors from reaping productivity gains.

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

The absence of contract farming legislation limits economies of scale in farm production. Nepal is currently import-dependent on both staple and cash crops, whose domestic production is short of filling domestic demand. Frequent labour disputes and politically-motivated disruptions have relegated Nepal's formal



non-agricultural sector to a low productivity trap, shielded from competition and new investments.

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

The country must deliver on large energy, transport and communication projects to lower transaction costs and boost return on investments. Improvement in the ease of doing business, identified by Doing Business (DB), should also be one of the main priorities. Rwanda, an LDC like Nepal, was ranked 56 among

190 economies in DB 2017. It attracted \$323 million in FDI – six times more than what Nepal, ranked at 107, received – in 2015.

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

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

The clever metalsmith

Akal Man Nakarmi passed away last week at age 71 virtually unnoticed by a nation preoccupied with the constitution and elections. Self-effacing and shy, it was just like the man to slip away quietly without letting anyone know.

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

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

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

Within a decade there were more than



3,000 micro-hydro plants in Nepal. Farmers rushed to install them with soft loans from the Agriculture Development Bank. "This is the answer to rural electrification, not a \$900 million dam," Nakarmi would say, holding the turbine in his palm.

A whole section of Nakarmi's workshop was devoted to an assembly-line for the Multi-purpose Power Units (MPPU) which

converted traditional water mills by upgrading the wooden paddles with more efficient curved metal blades and ball-bearings. The system not just processed food, it also produced power through a dynamo. Within a decade, nearly half the 30,000 or so traditional *ghatta* in Nepal had been converted into MPPUs and were even exported to Bhutan, Ladakh and Sri Lanka.

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

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

Nakarmi never spoke long enough to expound on his philosophy in life, but if he did, perhaps it would come closest to the 'Small Is Beautiful' concept put forward by E F Schumacher in the 1960s: small,

decentralised and self-contained energy systems that do not waste resources, do not damage the environment, are cheap and can be built and maintained locally.

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

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

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

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



MISS SLOANE

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

Nonetheless, they managed to actually get it right this year, even when the presenters (poor

Jessica Chastain's awe inducing, powerhouse performance in *Miss Sloane*, John Madden's political thriller, is a shocking lapse.

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

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

Miss Sloane is a character study of an extraordinary,

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

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

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

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

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



View trailer

[nepalitimes.com](#)

HAPPENINGS



GOPEN RAI

MEN WITH DOUGH: Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal at the inauguration of the two-day Nepal Investment Summit 2017 at Soaltee Hotel in Kathmandu on Friday.



TRUTH AND JUSTICE: German MP Omid Nouripour met Ganga Maya Adhikari on Sunday at Bir Hospital, where she has been on hunger strike for justice for her son murdered by the Moaists during the war.



GOPEN RAI

BACK ON HIS PEDESTAL: Workers on Monday at Patan Darbar Square reinstating the gilt statue of King Yognarendra Malla that was toppled in the 2015 earthquake.



NEPALAYA

FOR A CAUSE: Lead singer of the Nepali folk rock band Nepathya, Amrit Gurung, performs at a charity concert in Butwal on Sunday to support Abhiyan Nepal Child Home.



DIPESH SHRESTHA

FAIR PLAY: National Volunteers Nepal appointed Nepal cricket team skipper Paras Khadka as goodwill ambassador on Wednesday. He is flanked by Govinda Pokhrel (*left*) of the National Reconstruction Authority and Prashant Singh of the Himalayan Climate Initiative.

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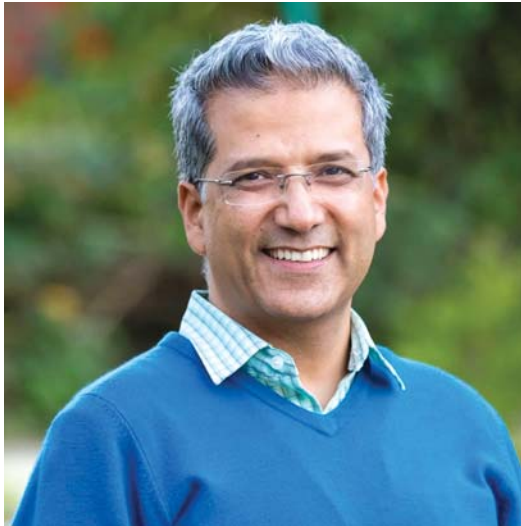


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Interviewing Rabindra Mishra

After stepping down as the head of BBC Nepali, Rabindra Mishra is forming a new political party, www.setopati.com, 28 February

सेतोपाटी



Setopati: Can you tell us about the perks of your job at BBC Nepali Service?

I drew a monthly salary of Rs 700,000. The office gave me a car, health insurance for me and four members of my family and paid my telephone bill. A journalist cannot expect more than this in Nepal. But from tomorrow, I will not be earning a paisa.

Then how will you survive?

I have savings. And I will be collecting rent from my two houses. I also have to pay back some loans. I will be devoting at least 15-16 hours a day to politics, and will work honestly.

Do you have what it takes to transform politics?

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

When did you first think about joining politics?

I returned from the UK to spent part of my time in philanthropy. But this was like trying to fill the Rani Pokhari with a bucket of water. We built 40 libraries, but over 32,000 schools in Nepal do

not have libraries. So I thought the only way is to join politics.

Why a new party?

I thought of that too. But I was afraid politicians in existing parties would turn me into one of them. Just look at the appointments of the new police chief and ambassadors.

What is your party's take on the democracy movements of 1990 and 2006?

We always blame our constitution and political system for our problems. We are always fighting to change them. Our

constitution was written in a democratic way, and we can develop Nepal within its framework.

There are doubts about whether elections will be held in May.

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

The Madhesi parties were left out of the constitution making process, isn't that a problem?

A constitution is a work in progress, it has to be improved constantly. Some problems are due to a lack of trust. Whether we separate Madhes from hills or keep them together while creating provinces does not make a difference.

Shouldn't you have tried to clean up journalism before trying to clean up politics?

The problems that plague journalism are an offshoot of our corrupt politics. If you clean up politics, you can clean up everything, including journalism.

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Cup: Ambassador
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नेपाल

Rabindra Manandhar in *Nepal*, 25 February

More tourists?

Editorial in Nagarik, March 1

नागरिक

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

Nepal Tourism Board is convinced that an international ad campaign will help Nepal's tourism recover from the earthquake. It has allocated Rs 60 million for commercials on the BBC, Rs 30 million for Trip Advisor and Rs 7 million for Reuters.

Nepal's biggest selling point is its hospitable people. Tourists keep coming back because of it, and we have not enhanced our natural assets, instead we have depleted them. But even the earthquake wasn't enough to decrease Nepali goodwill, and tourists still flocked in. There is no doubt the promotional campaign will bring in more tourists. But what will they do here? We are limited to old tourism products, and it is actually domestic tourism that has come to the rescue. The industry needs to upgrade its products, offer new attractions, streamline procedures so tourists stay longer than the average 13 days and spend more. The revenue should be ploughed into revamping our infrastructure. How about concentrating on cleaning things up at home before launching an international promotion?



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Premark/16

CASHING IN ON TRAGEDY

■ A 29-year-old patient was operated on for appendicitis at Bijaypur Hospital in Dharan last week. The surgery went well, but the patient choked on food and died during recovery. Angry relatives mobilised a crowd and vandalised the hospital. The matter was resolved only after the hospital agreed to pay compensation if an investigation proved negligence.

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

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



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An epidemic of hospital vandalism and attacks on health workers reflect Nepal's extreme politics and erosion of the rule of law

SONIA AWALE

There is not a week that goes by that a hospital isn't vandalised or health workers assaulted by angry mobs after a relative dies while being treated. Doctors say the spike in incidents reflects Nepal's extreme politics and the erosion of overall rule of law in the country.

Demoralised medical personnel are now reluctant to treat patients who are in serious condition, and refer complicated cases to other hospitals. Patients are therefore receiving less than optimum care.

To be sure, over-commercialisation of private hospital treatment, medical malpractice by poorly trained doctors, and unintentional lapses after admission have fed public perception that doctors are reckless and unscrupulous. However, a *Nepali Times* investigation of several recent cases of hospital vandalism and abuse show they were motivated not so much by grief of bereaved family members, but by extortion and a tendency for political activists to cash in on tragedy.

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

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

into virtual war zones. There have been instances where police resorted to baton charges in a hospital in Bharatpur, and had to fire tear gas in a Pokhara hospital after patients died.

Patients get complications even with the best care, and doctors cannot guarantee the recovery of everyone. Several doctors admitted that they now exaggerate how serious a patient is when briefing relatives just in case they are blamed.

"There are professional middlemen who hover around hospitals waiting for a patient to die. Most times they don't even know the patients, but they assure relatives they will force the hospital to pay a high compensation and divide it up," says one senior surgeon at a Kathmandu hospital.

As soon as news spreads of a patient's death, up to 300 people immediately gather shouting slogans, throwing stones and attacking doctors. The worst affected are maternity hospitals, trauma centres, and private centres like Om Hospital or Neurology Hospital.

An administrator who has served in four private hospitals in Kathmandu in his career says it is much the same everywhere, and the frequency of attacks has increased because of political instability and corruption.

Things have got so bad that medical staff are fighting back. After the video of the young doctor being humiliated in Charikot was posted on social media, medical personnel forced the hospital to close its In-Patient Department. The hospital used to treat 300 patients a day.

"The community wanted an investigation and better health services, but they never made any financial demand and were against closing the facility. The incident was escalated and politicised by groups with vested interests," said Hima Bista, of Possible, an NGO that works with the government to run Charikot Hospital.



GOPEN RAI

ACT NOW

An increase in vandalism at hospitals has prompted the government to table the Healthcare Worker Safety Act in consultation with hospitals. The new bill allows surgeons, doctors, nurses, paramedics and health institutions to pay a predetermined membership fee which will be used to compensate real victims and to repair vandalised hospitals. The government has already put Rs 5 million in the kitty.

"Doctors too can make mistakes. If health professionals are responsible for the death of a patient, they have to be investigated and punished according to the law, but you cannot do this by mob rule," said Gopi Neupane of APHIN (Association of Private Health Institutions Nepal).

The new Act provides a sense of security to health professionals and it is hoped to make them more responsible. It will also help doctors who unintentionally make mistakes to deal with the aftermath.

Last year, when a patient died in Everest Hospital, the relatives followed legal procedures for justice. An investigation found evidence of negligence and medical malpractice, and the family was fully compensated without middlemen.

A team including the Home Ministry and Ministry of Health investigated the Charikot case, and recommended long-term security for staff and patients. The government is now tabling a Healthcare Worker Safety Act (*see box*) to set up a fund to compensate genuine victims, hospitals and health workers.

"The most vulnerable to vandalism are trauma centres where there is a low chance of survival and treatment is expensive," explains the hospital administrator.

Doctors and nurses at maternity hospitals are also often assaulted when a baby or mother dies at childbirth. This is because a pregnancy involves two lives and often the mothers walk into hospital and relatives expect happy news.

"Very often you are not dealing with relatives, and the protesters have little medical knowledge," a senior gynaecologist told *Nepali Times*.

One case she recalls vividly is of a patient who died at childbirth, but her baby survived. An unruly crowd soon gathered, destroyed hospital property, intimidated staff and refused to take the body unless their demand for compensation was met. In the end, the hospital waived the delivery fee, and admitted the infant in neonatal intensive care for free.

These days, besides studying about disease and treatment, medical graduates also need training in crowd control and negotiations. But ultimately it is the government that has to provide security to hospitals.

"Government has to monitor and perform hospital audits. Accountability and transparency are a must and the public-private-partnership model needs to be understood," says Bista. "The public needs to know that medical care is compromised if we function in a climate of fear." 🇳🇵



ROHIT RAI

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It is rocket science

Some of you may be under the wrong impression that our institutions of higher learning are full of goons. That is a slightly inaccurate portrayal of reality. They are actually full of arsonists. They have invented fire and discovered that the office of the registrar is highly inflammable.

loadshedding, he can do anything.

Another inventor Anil Gautam of Rupandehi also made a helicopter that stubbornly refuses to be airborne. Gautam has found why it doesn't fly: "The Prime Minister hasn't yet come to see me yet." He says the chopper that weighs as much as a Tata truck

will fly if CAAN gives permission.

Imaginative Nepalis are not just making imaginary helicopters. Bhim Sunar of Baglung has made an SUV mysteriously named 'Ocean'. He had made a dozer and a helicopter while in Grade 10. "If the government gives me Rs 300,000 I can make a car that will actually move," he told a packed news conference.

The sky is not the limit for Nepal's space cadets. Eighth grader Biraj designed a top secret three-stage, booster-assisted, sub-orbital launch vehicle with an optional warhead. We would never have learnt of this great leap forward had it not been for the national media which scooped everyone by publishing the blueprint. Biraj is now waiting to be contacted by the DPRK military. Asked how difficult it was to build the missile, Biraj replied: "It is rocket science."

The Ass

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