



# Free Expression

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A NEWSLETTER OF FREEDOM FORUM

## Media for Functional Democracy

**F**reedom Forum marked the National Democracy Day by organizing a dialogue relating to democracy and the right to freedom of expression and opinion and assembly in Kathmandu on 17 February.

Every year, Falgun 7, 2007 BS (Feb 17 this year) is marked as the historic day as it is the turning point of Nepal's history in terms of significant change in socioeconomic fronts to political freedoms. The day (Falgun 7) not only reminds the fall of autocratic Rana regime, but also the day that ushered in with civil liberties in Nepal.

Keynote speaker at the program, senior journalist Harihar Birahi, spoke on multifarious issues of human rights in different phases of the country since 2007. He said democracy brought forth tremendous opportunities for the new generation with right to freedom of expression and others.

According to him, the party-less system after 1960 however saw harrowing days for media merely



Participants at a program marking the National Democracy Day in Kathmandu on Feb 17.

for their role to make people aware of their rights. "Despite the State hostility, Nepalis struggle to keep on media practice to protect and promote right to freedom of expression," he added. Although the atmosphere for freedom of expression and opinion was too hostile in those days, there are still the challenges for people's easy and comfortable practice of FoE and opinion.

Participating in the discussion, INSEC Chairman Subodh Pyakurel, speaking about

competence and professionalism in media, said the journalists need to revise whether their academic course is knowledge based or technical. Media could play a significant role to foster democratic practices while discouraging the threats on democracy. Noted human rights activist Charan Parsai stated that self-censorship was widely seen in today's newspaper. Only independent media help bring change in the society, he said, adding that journalists are the frontline human rights activists.

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## Online Media Directive against FoE

**F**reedom Forum has been alarmed over the issuance of the Online Media Operation Directive 2017 through its publication in the gazette. Since the government made attempt to bring the directive relating to online media, FF has been constantly watchful whether it fully embraces the freedom of expression principle and international practice.

A year back, the Ministry of Information and Communication floated the proposal as 'Online Media Operation and Management Directive 2016' to which FF showed serious concern that it was faulty and discouraging to internet-based media, which is gaining ground with the gradual expansion of internet in Nepal. Receiving severe criticism from the FoE defenders as FF, the Ministry had withdrawn it, saying it would garner suggestions and amend accordingly. But it has been brought with slightly different name 'Online Media Operation Directive-2017' this time without any fundamental difference from the earlier version.

Amazingly, the Directive has been brought under the Good Governance (Management and Operation) Act-2007 which means the government has taken online media as a mere medium of good governance and as a government entity to deliver service rather than as a vibrant medium to boost the practice of freedom of expression and bring citizen's voice in the main stream. The internet-based media are therefore not recognized equally as other media and the employees on it as journalists. Ridiculous enough, the 'online journalism' is defined as a mere technical work in the internet.

Most importantly, anyone- even the TV and newspaper running online service- has been asked to register their online media and renew it. In the name of registration, there is high chance that government would take steps to suppress freedom of expression at any time.

As the internet is a free, open and vast regime, the expression (journalism) through it must be respected equally as other form of media in line with universal principle of freedom of expression. Registration is unjust step to block this open medium. FF demands immediate repeal of the Directive.

Policy  
Watch

Meanwhile, various media related organizations have expressed concern over the Directive, saying that it was oriented towards control of internet-based media rather than their management.

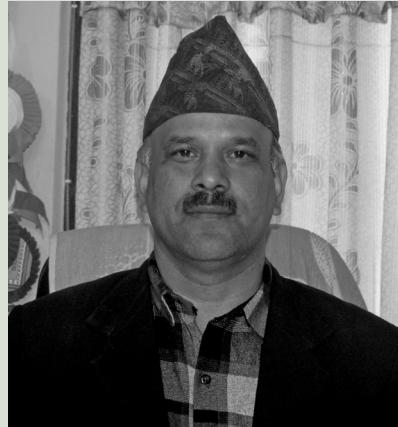
Even a writ petition has been filed at Supreme Court against the Directive issued on March 26. The petition demanded the SC to repeal the Directive, arguing that it was against freedom of expression, right to information and the constitutional provisions.

# Message from Executive Chief

The introduction of new constitution in September 2015 has guaranteed federalism in Nepal. With the constitutional set up in place, it has not only created tremendous debate and discussion on federalism, but also prodded the political parties and the bureaucracy to embrace the changed system. Although it created confusion among the people with little orientation from the political parties on the new system, they too have been gradually embracing the change and focusing on the preparation. As the term suggests itself, the federalism is indeed a significant shift from the unitary to the local-centric, local-empowered system. Now, there are a total of 744 local governance units fitting the federal system. The service from the previous Village Development Committee has been transferred to ward level while those from the previous district development committee to the rural municipalities and municipalities, while the district development committee has been changed into the district coordination committee according to the new constitution. It clearly suggests that services and entitlements to people have in a way reached to every door step compared to the previous unitary system. It has not only ensured citizen's quick access to service but also the platform for the exercise of rights. It is the empowerment of local people.

With this historical shift of power, authority and service from central to the local level, the role of citizen is expected active. Active role of citizens is important to monitor whether are fully ensured their rights and service as provisioned in the constitution. Practice of participatory democracy can be ensured with effective collaboration and cooperation with the civil society. The civil society as the common platform of the people to create a concerted pressure on the authorities helps local governance maintain transparency and accountability to build the ultimate model of good governance.

It is therefore the role of civil society needs to be augmented as per the changed context. A huge amount of budget is going to the local level, which need monitoring by the people, by the civil society, to curb financial irregularities. Similarly, their active participation in the planning, formulating and implementing budget, and



development activities is imperative to ensure the smooth delivery of public service. Such momentous transfer of power should be utilized well to percolate democratic values and practices. If the role of civil society is shrunk at such stage, similar occurrence of administrative malfeasance, financial irregularities and corruption can not be ignored.

Moreover, Nepal is undergoing unprecedented tasks of reconstruction. The proper use of the flow of budget from the central to local level must be guaranteed so that the role from diverse sector is unavoidable. It is the civil society that not only bridges the governance to the public, but also is a meaning partner in the government initiative for change. The presence of civil society as a monitoring agency on the activities relating to local governance is aimed at boosting open and transparent system where people are the important beneficiaries.

Conclusively, Nepal as a least developed country is fully aware of the sustainable development agenda. It is pertinent enough to mention the Goal 16 of the SDG here- "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." In order to achieve the peace, and inclusive and just society, it is high time all sides played their role with fine collaboration and cooperation to consolidate democracy and federalism. 

Taranath Dahal

# Inclusive mechanism to enforce SDG sought

Freedom Forum and four dozen other CSOs have urged the government to duly follow the international commitments in term of the steps the National Planning Commission (NPC) has taken recently on implementing the Sustainable Development Agenda.

A joint statement issued by these CSOs have urged the NPC to rectify the decision it made in the context of implementing Sustainable Development Agenda; and to ensure representation of civil society and non-government sector in the High-Level Committees.

According to them, the Government of Nepal has come up with the decision to form unilateral kinds of High-Level Committees consisting of Government Officials, and having institutional representation of the private sector alone. "Such a decision has made us feel that the Government has intended to put aside the entire non-government sector and civil society outside of national development process," they argued.

The NPC, through a press release issued on 23 March 2017, had announced the formation of two High Level Committees – one, the National Steering Committee, and the second, the Implementation Coordination and Monitoring Committee, including nine Thematic Working Groups to rollout and implement the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

"Despite aforesaid attempt per se being an encouraging initiative, both the High-Level Official Committees do not contain any provision for ensuring institutional representation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Our serious attention has been drawn towards the intent of the Government of Nepal not demonstrating any reliable basis for inclusion of diverse social groups such as Dalit, poor, differently-able persons, immigrants, women, young people, HIV affected persons, and indigenous people who remained outside of the development mainstream for long; among the leading CSOs of other class and communities, in line with the spirit of "leave no one behind" as enshrined in the Sustainable Development Agenda," they stated in the press release.

The CSOs reminded that the success of the agenda is possible only when there is ownership, collaboration, support and contribution of all concerned stakeholders. They have reminded the preamble section of the Sustainable Development Agenda- "As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind". (Joint statement on Page 9) 

# Press Freedom Violations

## Security hostility to media

**A.** Correspondent with The Himalayan Times, Prabhat Kumar Jha, from Rautahat district was injured in a police attack while reporting about protest on February 26. Rautahat lies in the southern plain of Nepal.

During a telephonic conversation with Freedom Forum, reporter Jha explained, "A clash broke out between the riot police and cadres of the agitating Madhes-based parties after the cadres demonstrated against a political leader. When I was there covering the incident for the news, an Armed Police Force person kicked me on my leg and stomach. I am taking medicine to relieve pain".

He further said he was showing his Press Card but the police continued kicking.

**B.** It was quite alarming that an FM radio run by the Central Department of Journalism and Mass Communications at Tribhuvan University was shut down for three days due to obstruction from security persons.

The TU FM 107 MHz located inside the RR campus in the Kathmandu Valley was shut after security obstruction.

Issuing a press release, the Department Head, Chiranjivi Khanal said, "The FM radio was closed after the police persons did not allow any of the journalists citing the 'order from high level' on February 6, the day of the election of free students union scheduled at RR Campus."

Mr Khanal also informed Freedom Forum over the phone that they tried to convince the security persons for resuming the radio and meet the Information Minister, but in vain. He added that security persons were told that election of student union and running FM radio were different, but they were not adamant.

Although FF phoned the high level security to know the matter, it was not responded.

## Petrol bomb attack

A petrol bomb was hurled against a group of three photojournalists namely, Keshav Thapa of The Kathmandu Post, Shreedhar Poudel of Online Khabar and Manoj Thapa of Metro FM 95.6 by an unidentified gang on March 28.

The attack took place while they were reporting on the clashes between Police and various student unions protesting against the Free Student Union's election at Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus in the Kathmandu Valley.

During a conversation with Freedom Forum, journalist Thapa said, "After we took the pictures of the ongoing FSU election and the protest, a gang threw a petrol bomb which blasted near us. Being close, I had a minor injury on legs and eyes and am using an eye drop. Other friends however, escaped injury."

On a separate talk with journalist Poudel, he shared, "Even though we escaped injury, few hours later, a group approached me for coffee and threatened me not to post more pictures and make elaborate the protest for my own safety. I am pretty sure they too belonged to the protesting students' group. Thus, the attack may be preplanned, he confirmed."

Information about the attack and threat has been given to police, he added.

### Press Freedom Violation from Jan to March 2017



## Political cadres attack journalists

Chairperson of Radio Janakpur, Shital Saha, and reporter with Nagarik daily, Suresh Yadav, from Janakpur were attacked by political party cadres today (22 February) while they were reporting about the picketing of a house belonging to the political leader. Janakpur lies in the southern plains of the country.

Talking to Freedom Forum from the hospital, reporter with Radio Janakpur, Sheetal Saha said, "After we returned to our offices with reporting, a group of 15 people attacked us with sharp weapon. My head got severe injury and had to get it stitched. Similarly, Yadav received minor injury on his back."

Saha argued that the cadres of the Madhes-centric political parties attacked them. Although they had reported the incident without biasness, the attackers claimed that the news was baseless. The attack was pre-planned, he further said. According to him, atmosphere for free reporting is being challenged with rising agitation of the Madhes-based political parties.

As the government announced the much awaited date to hold local body elections on coming May 14, the Madhes-centric political parties have been irate, posing demand of constitution amendment first.

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# Government Bodies Not Receptive to Media

## Threat over Facebook

A team of journalists was threatened by Suresh Chandra DC, Assistant Forest Officer, through Facebook on February 3 over a news story on massive illegal deforestation in Jorayal area of Doti published on many newspapers and online news portals. Doti is the district which lies in the far western region of Nepal.

Talking to Freedom Forum, reporter with the Himalaya Times, Min Bahadur Budha said, "With flurry of news on illegal tree felling in Jorayal Area over online and print media for a week, District Forest Office Doti suspended its two officers, while an assistant officer Suresh Chandra DC was transferred to its Budar Sector Office." Later, DC claiming he was not involved in the tree felling threatened journalists over the Facebook.

In the Facebook status, DC wrote: "Do whatever you can, but don't blame innocent as guilty and the guilty as innocent. Otherwise, your pens will be smashed, and the backbone broken."

Reporter Budha confirmed that the news was written after field inspection by the team of journalists.

## Manhandle

Government employees have manhandled reporter with Nagarik daily from Bara, Upendra Yadav, over news story. The staffs at District Forest Office manhandled and spoke foul word on him on 8 March. Bara lies on the southern plains of Nepal.

He was misbehaved for writing a news story entitled "50 cubic feet timber seized" which was published in the Nagarik daily.

Talking to Freedom Forum over phone, Reporter Yadav said, "Around 1:00 pm officers from District Forest Officer called me for a meeting with them at regarding the news on seized timber. After I reached there, DFO Bhairab Ghimire started talking foul on me for writing news against them and then, assistant forest officers Bindheswor Patel and Shiv Shankar Thakur tried to attack me. However, a local UML leader stopped them."

On further enquiry about the news, reporter Yadav argued that the news was evidence based.

## Camera seized

Pahal KC, In-Charge of Pathlaiya-based Revenue Investigation Check post, Bardibas, seized the camera possessed by Raj Karan Mahato, reporter with the Annapurna Post daily and right to information campaigner from Mahottari, on February 20, while reporting check post's staff's misbehavior towards a local tractor driver. Mahottari district lies in the southern plains of Nepal.

Talking to Freedom Forum, reporter Mahato said, "While I was taking pictures of a revenue investigation, check post's In-Charge KC threatened me why I took picture without his permission, and seized my camera."

## NEWS PORTAL BLOCKED

A news portal newssewa.com operated from Kathmandu has been blocked since 11:00 pm February 3, over the news published on the portal.

Talking to Freedom Forum's Media Monitoring Desk, editor of the news portal, Bishnu Pokhrel, said, "News about a senior police official was published on the website few days ago, entitling- Deputy Inspector General (DIG)'s of Nepal Police activities to hide misdeeds. Following this, on 3rd February, a police constable visited the office and threatened why the editor published news about senior police official. The website was blocked the same night."

Moreover, Editor Pokhrel explained that the internet service provider informed him that Central Investigation Bureau of Nepal Police had directed (internet service provider) to block the portal.

Meanwhile, when Freedom Forum inquired Nepal Telecommunications Authority Director Cum Information Officer Mr. Purushottam Khanal about the website blocking, he stated that the news portal was blocked as per the order issued from CIB, but if the website was registered at Nepal Press Council, NTA would lift the blocking.

Later, the NTA was learnt to have blocked two more news portals- arthiknews.com and karnalikhabar.com.

Press Council Nepal confirmed that the news portal was registered there.

Even after informing that he was a reporter with Annapurna Post and an RTI campaigner, he denied and asked me to show ID card, reporter Mahato added.

However, as the locals shouted at KC why he seized journalists' property, KC along with his staffs fled the scene, leaving the camera.

## Obstruction

The media persons were barred from entering the TU stadium thereby hindering the reporting on the ongoing cricket match played between Nepal and Kenya on March 11.

Media persons had reached stadium to report on the Nepali team's training on the eve of the first match. The World Cricket League Championship match was held between Nepal and Kenya. Security persons did not allow their entry despite sporting Pass given by the ICC. The security persons told reporters that they had the instruction not to allow reporters inside the stadium.

Later, they managed to enter, but due to sorry state of management, they had to make news despite rains.

Meanwhile, reporter with News 24, Riya Bhandari, and cameraperson Madhav Ghimire were manhandled by the staffs at Shahid Gangalal National Heart Centre while recording bites and vox pop on March 29. News 24 is a television being broadcasted from the capital city Kathmandu.

During a telephonic conversation with Freedom Forum, reporter Bhandari stated, "Upon continuous invitation from the hospital's administration for reporting, we reached the venue at 2:00 pm. While we were waiting for the officers, some patients came to us and expressed their views and opinions about hospital service. As we were recording the bites and vox pop, the hospital staffs arrived and asked us to delete whatever we had recorded."

Adding further, Bhandari said that they also shoved her and the cameraperson for reporting, arguing that they were reporting without the permission of hospital administration.

# Death Threats

**A.** Editor of the Arthik daily, Prahlad Rijal, was threatened of life over phone for the publication of a news story on January 15.

Vinay Rawal, arguing that the news would tarnish his image, threatened editor of life, according to Editor Rijal. The Arthik daily is published from the capital city Kathmandu.

Talking to Freedom Forum, editor Rijal said, "In the Sunday morning (Jan 15), Vinay Rawal phoned me and said he would finish me because I published news that hampers his business."

**B.** A private school principal at Lahan city of southern plain of the country issued a death threat to a correspondent with Naya Patrika daily, Dilip Singh, for a news story on March 20.

Reporter Singh was threatened of life over the news published on arrest of fake invigilator

from exam hall during the ongoing Secondary Education Examination.

During a telephonic conversation with Freedom Forum, reporter Singh shared, "In the evening around 4:30 pm while I was writing news, Principal of a local Ideal English Boarding School, Murari Saha, suddenly approached me, and threatened of hacking me to death, asking why I wrote the news."

Reporter Singh argues that he had covered the news after witnessing the invigilator helping students cheat during the exam and the subsequent arrest from onsite.

Chief District Officer and the police officers were informed in written after the death threat, the reporter added.

**C.** A local Sukmaya Tamang in Kanchapur district issued death threat against editor and publisher of Hello Punarwas weekly and executive editor of the Seti Samachar daily,

Ranjit Lama, on March 24, over a news story on a border firing which had claimed a life of a youth. Both the media outlets are run from Kanchanpur, a city situated in the far-west of Nepal.

On a conversation with Freedom Forum, editor Lama shared, "At 4:00 pm Friday, Sukmaya Tamang (aka Kali) called me by a mobile number 9809461166 and threatened me of 'breaking my head and doing whatever she wanted on meeting me'. I am frightened to go to my own home at Punarwas. Some days ago, members of a local struggle committee torched the newspapers and even blocked its circulation."

Journalist Lama further said the local struggle committee members obstructed newspaper circulation, arguing that the news published was not in favour of the country.

FNJ Kanchanpur and Nepali Police were informed of the threat, he added. 

## High Court upholds District Court decision of life imprisonment to Journo Uma Singh's murderers

**J**anakpur High Court has upheld the District Court Dhanusha's decision of life imprisonment to murderers of journalist Uma Singh. In the verdict issued on March 15, three convicts of Singh's murderer - Nemlal Paswan, Umesh Yadav alias Swamiji and Singh's sister in law Lalita Devi Singh were sentenced life imprisonment with confiscation of entire property. Division bench of Judges Narayan Prasad Pokharel and Chandra Bahadur Sadhu issued the verdict on the 2009 murder case.

Impunity Watch

After the District Court verdict in 2015, the murderers had knocked the Appellate Court (which is now turned into the High Court as per the federal set up). Reporter with local Janakpur Today daily and Radio Today, Uma Singh, was excruciatingly killed in her rented house on January 11, 2009. Earlier, District Court Dhanusha had issued a decision on remanding custody to convict of Arun Singhaniya's murderer Sanjay Sah on December 1, 2016. He is still facing the case.



Slain Journalist Uma Singh.

# Film Denied Approval Merely for its 'Title'

**T**he Film Development Board Nepal has denied the approval for the development of a movie named "Gajabaja", directed by Ganesh Dev Pandey (Tuka Entertainment) merely because of its 'title' (Gajabaja). Director and the producers of the film shared the information with Freedom Forum that FDB denied approval to the film arguing that the term 'gaja' (marijuana) would promote marijuana. Gaja is contraband in Nepal. The FDB refused to recognize the film merely because of its title, they said, adding that it was denied production since February 2016. When the line ministry was inquired about this, it too said the word 'gaja' could be omitted, as it would not give good message. Now, even a case has been filed at Supreme Court by the director and producers against the non-issuance of approval.

## My right to FoE violated: Director Pandey

Movie 'Gajabaja' being produced by the Tuka Entertainment has been denied approval from Film Development Board Nepal merely because of its title 'Gaja' since February 2016. As the government bodies, including FDB and Ministry of Information, are against the title of the movie, Director Ganesh Pandey is desperately waiting for a verdict from Supreme Court. He shares about the hassles and struggles in this course this way:

### *What are the problems and challenges you have been facing after this obstruction?*

**Pandey:** As a citizen, I think arts should have no boundaries, and free from any restrictions and permissions. But, we have to request for permit at every step which is very much discouraging.

However, as per the rule, on pre-production phase, I went to Film Development Board to register the name for starting production of the movie on February 2016. They called me on the next date and the following day, they informed me that my movie's name could not be regis-

tered for some unknown reason. Afterwards, they explained that it was decided from the top-level and according to the existing law that my film was not approved.

Being dissatisfied, I met Chairperson of the FDB, Mr. Raj Kumar Rai and sought the reason behind the denial of approval to our film. He asked me being an educated person how I could choose such name for my movie. He said that they would approve it if I changed its name. I was taken by surprise at his answer and felt my work was disrespected.



Director Ganesh Pandey

### *What's the current status of the movie?*

**Pandey:** I am an artist, so whatever may be the situation I won't stop my work and hence movie production is going on. Almost 90 percent of the production has completed, but still I am receiving numerous threats regarding the approval and release of the movie. They have also restricted me from advertising and releasing the trailer. However, I have been receiving continuous support from my team.

### *What is your expectation for the state/government?*

**Pandey:** State should stop imposing censorship on the film, as it is also a medium to guarantee citizen's right to information. And yes, if something is wrong, they can investigate it and find out what's wrong and punish the real culprit. But, this act of pre-censorship shows how corrupt is the mechanism of State and to what extent they are ready to protect their own misdeeds, thereby controlling the medium of freedom of expression. In my view, the state bodies and concerned officials are ignorant about the universal principles of FoE.

### *What if SC again defers the date?*

**Pandey:** The situation I am facing nowadays has physically, mentally and financially affected me. However, I will not step back. They have tried to obstruct us from all sides thus, creating pressure. Even my colleagues and well-wishers suggest me to change the name of the movie and get rid of these hurdles. Producers' and directors' society are also afraid to talk in my favor and saying that I have to support the government's decision.

I will continue to fight for justice. My fight is not just against laws and policies, my fight is with the mindset of the governing bodies because I clearly know my work has not violated any law. I am positive towards getting justice one day, and am sure the decision will change the system and pave the way for my fellows in future too. Yes, still a huge question on my mind is: What is in the name if the sole message of movie is to expose social ills by making people aware about drug abuse and its effects? 

FoE  
Watch

# Organizational Activities

## Media Reforms and Improved RTI Practice

Freedom Forum has launched a project named "Enabling Environment for Media Law Reforms and Improved RTI Practice" for the period from January 2017 to June 2019 in collaboration of CS: MAP/FHI 360. FF has set the broader objective of the project as the strengthened enabling environment for civil society and media. Similarly, fostering a more legitimate, accountable, and resilient Nepali civil society that is capable of advancing the public interest is the expected outcome of the project. The project to cover 20 USAID/CDCS districts and the earthquake affected 14 districts has set the immediate objective as the improvement of legal and policy framework, based on international standards, to create an enabling environment for the media and public understanding and confidence in the role of CSO and media.

In order to realize the objectives, FF has chosen the areas of intervention as review of i) media policy framework, ii) National Mass Communication Policy (NMCP), iii) Online Media Directive (OMD), iv) Electronic Transaction Act (ETA-47), v) Bill of Civil and Criminal Code 2071 (FOE related provision only), vi) Interac-

tion with parliamentarians, vii) Policy lobby and advocacy and, viii) Policy co-ordination.

## RTI file at 60 Colleges

Freedom Forum has continued its campaign of building good governance with the use of RTI application thereby making the public agencies accountable and transparent. In this bid, the FF filed RTI applications in a total of sixty colleges affiliated to Tribhuvan University across the country, seeking various information, including the internal audit and name of information officer.

According to Freedom Forum's Executive Chief, Taranath Dahal, in accordance with Article 27 of Constitution 2072 and Section 3 of the Right to Information Act 2007, he and RTI activist Kumar Chaulagain demanded the following information from the 60 colleges:

- Lists of the team mobilized by Fiscal Administration Division, TU, for internal audit of the college,
- Certified copy of the letter received from the Center,
- Verified copy of internal audit report of Fiscal Year 2015/16 of the college,
- Dates on start and end of the internal audit of the college,

- Details on expenditure incurred under different headings during auditing period,
- Official copy of approval letter for above mentioned expenses,
- Name of Information Officer in according to RTI Act section (6),
- And, a certified copy including name, designation, working sector, contact number and his office room's number.

"Despite the passage of a decade after enforcement of RTI Act and two decades after the guarantee of the citizen's access to information, the public agencies are still unaware about it," Executive Chief Dahal wondered, adding, "Therefore, I have demanded information from sixty different colleges across the country." The CC of application has been forwarded to National Information Commission, Vice-Chancellor of TU and District Administration Office.

Among the colleges, Bhojpur Multiple Campus Bhojpur, Surya Narayan Yadav Multiple Campus Siraha, Nursing Campus Nepalganj Banke, Doti Multiple Campus Doti, Terhathum Multiple Campus Terhathum and Institute of Forestry Hetauda Makwanpur have provided information as per demanded on time. Similarly, application has been filed at National Information Commission against colleges like Nepal Law Campus Kathmandu, Ram Swarup Ram Sagar Campus Janakpur, Birgunj Nursing Campus Parsa, Prithvi Narayan Campus Pokhara and Institute of Forestry Pokhara which denied giving information.

Likewise, under the Section 7(2) and 7(3) of RTI Act 2007, application has also been filed against Information officers and Office Heads of those colleges which neither responded to the information request nor to the application filed against Office Head.

## Men's March Celebrating Women's Day

It was pleasant hot at about 1:30pm in a cultural town of Lalitpur city- Jawalakhel. There was a gathering of only male folks and it was bulging gradually without any noticeable stage for any programme. There were teenagers, youths and the adults but negligible number of women, carrying placards which read-'Men for Women'. Yes, it was the March 8, so it was not a cultural pageant as usually used to be in the town previously. One could wonder why women were not the participants. Yes, it was the preparation of 'men only' march to observe the Women's Day.

Freedom Forum in collaboration with other organizations (Antenna Foundation, Restless Development, Dance 4 Life, Nepal Forum of Environment Journalists and CWIN) organized a march, observing the International Women's Day in Kathmandu on March 8. The march named 'Walk for Change' was attended by a large number of men folks.

The event was entitled 'M4W (Men for Women) march' that began from Jawalakhel with more than hundred men participants carrying placards, and passed through the thoroughfares as Manbhawan, Kumaripati, Lagankhel, Mangalbazaar and concluded upon reaching Patan Durbar Square. Interesting-



ly, each participant was asked to bind their wrists with hair band, which they could offer their female relative- spouse, mother, sister after reaching home. It was symbolic gift for women as an honour to them.

FF believes that such event would help raise awareness on women's rights in the country where women are yet to enjoy the rights equal to men.

The march was observed by the representatives from Free Press Unlimited. The FPU informed that similar programmes were organized in Bangladesh and Indonesia as well, marking the Women's Day.

**Men for Women**

*Meanwhile, RTI based information collected by FF from 30 ministries under Nepal Government and 40 other organizations have been taken by the Legislature Parliament's Good Governance and Monitoring Committee for their own study and investigative purpose. The file contained information on status and fuel expenses incurred by the vehicles owned by Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers, other line ministries and their corporate bodies which was requested under RTI Act by FF's Executive Chief Taranath Dahal and RTI Campaigner Kumar Chaulagain.*

# Internet Governance Issues in Nepal

A total of 3.6 billion people – nearly half the world population- use the internet now. As the internet has become a global facility for communication, commerce and innovation, it has been the hangout of the youth populace these days. Nepal, despite being the least developed country, has witnessed increasing internet penetration. As per the recent Management Information System (MIS) report of the Nepal Telecommunications Authority, the internet penetration has reached 54.34% in Nepal. However, question persists of quality- internet speed and access.

As is the global trend, most of the users of internet in Nepal are obviously the youths. The overwhelming presence of youths and teenagers in the social media as Facebook and twitter is its indication. Gone are the days of 'a b c d', daily life of digital natives is engaged with 'a s d f'.

The vibrant youths coming up with critical views and comments on national issues through the social media is the ultimate example of the freedom of expression on easy and accessible media. It is because of the expansion of the internet. The State bodies and private sectors too have reaped huge benefit with this advanced communication facility by spreading their information and messages to a larger audience in a short time. These activities have tremendously contributed to the civic participation and engagement on multifarious issues of public importance, which is indeed a democracy practice with transparency in governance. However, the marvel of the modern science and technology- internet- is still a wonder for huge number of people. That is to say, the digital divide is growing. And the issues shadowed but alarmingly increasing are the cyber crimes everywhere disregarding the extent.

Talking about the freedom of expression online, it is noteworthy that hardly a week had passed since the government issued the Online Media Operation Directive by publishing it in the Nepal Gazette, a writ petition was filed at the Supreme Court, demanding the repeal of the Directive, arguing that it was against the freedom of expression principle and practice. The Directive was received negatively by the stakeholders as media fraternity and FoE rights defenders. They too argued that in the name of registration and renewal of online media, the State could emerge tough and misuse the internet-media at any time which would be a gross violation of FoE. Such provision would not only intimidate online journalism but also block the internet-media from becoming professional and independent.



*Narayan Prasad Ghimire*

Similarly, there are efforts being made from civil society and individuals on various issues as open data, data journalism, and data for innovation. In a way or other these technical parts are related to internet. There is also Nepal Chapter of Internet Society where technologists, data scientists, lawyers and rights defenders are together to discuss various issues relating to internet.

Also worthy to mention here is that Minister for Health Gagan Thapa was said to have talked about the need of systematic data and data

As the internet governance is the most complicated and comprehensive, equal participation and engagement of State, private sectors and civil society is important to discuss and debate on it at a time when the internet has become the global nervous system for communication, commerce and innovation.

management for better policy planning and implementation.

And Section 47 of the Electronic Transaction Act has been a butt of attack by FoE rights defenders for long in Nepal.

The above mentioned issues seem scattered tidbit, contents from different sectors- technology, policy, information, data, private sector, government, State, human rights, crime, justice, development and innovation. Of course, these are the scattered issues which largely fall under the regime of internet governance. The emergence of such issues has now paved the way for all-side people to come together to discuss and debate on the internet governance.

What's the internet governance actually? The World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) defined the internet governance in early 2000's- "Internet governance is the development and application by governments, the private sector, and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of internet."

Once we mull the above mentioned contents and this definition together, the internet governance is the umbrella sphere to incorporate all these ranging from policy to technology, crimes to justice and development to innovation, which are related to people's internet behaviour.

Though late, civil society and youths have been attracted towards this regime. As the internet governance is the most complicated and comprehensive, equal participation and engagement of State, private sectors and civil society is important to discuss and debate on it at a time when the internet has become the global nervous system for communication, commerce and innovation.

To discuss this complicated topic, the first internet governance forum was held in Greece in 2006. Since then, this global internet platform is held every year while the recent one was held in Guadalajara city of Mexico in November 2016.

A single writing and debate is not enough to raise awareness on internet governance. Anyway, we can be hopeful that atmosphere is being created gradually for broad talk- a multi-stakeholders' talk on internet governance in Nepal.

(Source: National News Agency –RSS- March 29, 2017)

# SDGs Implementation and Civil Society

March 27, 2017

We have acknowledged the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations as a common agenda for all. The UN Member States and their respective governments, though, are primarily responsible for its execution; it sees collaborative actions by the governments, civil society cum non-government sector, private sector, international development partners, local governments, parliaments, judiciaries, including target communities, for achieving goals through effective implementation. In fact, the success of the agenda is possible only when there is ownership, collaboration, support and contribution of all concerned stakeholders.

We had been persistently appealing for the formation of a High-level Multi-stakeholder Mechanism in the lead of the Government of Nepal that would embrace representation of an array of diverse stakeholders in order to implement the Sustainable Development Agenda. The National Planning Commission, through a press release issued on 23 March 2017, has announced the formation of two High Level Committees – one, the National Steering Committee, and the second, the Implementation Coordination and Monitoring Committee, including nine Thematic Working Groups to rollout and implement the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. We have recognized the act of the Commission to form these structures following 18 months since the commencement of the Sustainable Development Agenda as a positive step. Furthermore, we have hoped that this will expedite the process of implementation of Sustainable Development Agenda in the country.

Despite aforesaid attempt per se being an encouraging initiative, both the High-Level Official Committees do not contain any provision for ensuring institutional representation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Our serious attention has been drawn towards the intent of the Government of Nepal not demonstrating any reliable basis for inclusion of diverse social groups such as Dalit, poor, differently-able persons, immigrants,

## Joint Statement

women, young people, HIV affected persons, and indigenous people who remained outside of the development mainstream for long; among the leading CSOs of other class and communities, in line with the spirit of "leave no one behind" as enshrined in the Sustainable Development Agenda. This is adverse to the Principle of Inclusive Development as envisaged by the Constitution of Nepal and the 14th National Development Plan of the country as well. Through this statement, we therefore would like to bring to the attention of the Government of Nepal, particularly of the National Planning Commission, and all concerned stakeholders that we are at loggerheads with the decision. The decision has caused room for doubt cast upon the commitment of the Government of Nepal to sincerely translate the Sustainable Development Agenda into action.

Civil society and non-government sector, across the globe, played crucial role in formulation of the Sustainable Development Agenda. Coming to its implementation phase at recent time, their roles and contributions are equally important for effective implementation of the agenda. While talking of the roles, civil society and non-government organizations – as the independent development partners, want their meaningful and dignified participation in policy making, programs formulation and implementation, including in the processes of monitoring, review and evaluation. The preamble section of the Sustainable Development Agenda clearly states that "As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind". The point 39 of the Agenda envisages bringing together all stakeholders and actors, including civil society, for implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda. Similarly, we would like to recall the role of civil society that is vividly manifested in the additional points 6, 41, 52, 60, 70, 79, and 84, of the Agenda.

Whereas the United Nations, officially recognizing nine "Major Groups", has been facilitating all sectors of society to participate in all kinds of processes of the Sustainable Development Agenda; the Government of Nepal has come up with the decision to form unilateral kinds of High-Level Committees consisting of Government Officials, and having institutional representation of the private sector

alone. Such a decision has made us feel that the Government has intended to put aside the entire non-government sector and civil society outside of national development process.

Therefore, we urge the Government Nepal to duly pursue its international commitments; to rectify this decision made in the context of implementing Sustainable Development Agenda; and to ensure representation of civil society and non-government sector in the High-Level Committees.

### In Solidarity – The Following Civil Society Organizations

NGO Federation of Nepal  
 Alliance against Trafficking of Women and Children in Nepal  
 Beyond Beijing Committee Nepal  
 National Association of Community Electricity Users Nepal  
 Human Right Alliance  
 Dalit NGO Federation (DNF)  
 Federation of Drinking Water and Sanitation Users Nepal  
 Federation of community Forestry Users Nepal  
 National Federation of Disabled Nepal  
 NGO Federation of Nepalese Indigenous Nationalities (NGO FONIN)  
 Collective Campaign for Peace  
 CONSORTIUM Nepal  
 National Senior Citizens Federation of Nepal  
 National Federation of Irrigation Water Users' Association Nepal  
 Association of Youth Organizations Nepal  
 Justice and Rights Institute Nepal (JuRI-Nepal)  
 CAHURAST Nepal  
 Lumanti Nepal  
 South Asia Partnership Nepal (SAP Nepal)  
 Jagaran Nepal  
 Digo Bikas Institute  
 Nepal Disabled Women Association (NDWA)  
 Srijanshil Mahila Samuha  
 Freedom Forum  
 Climate Change Network Nepal  
 Saathi  
 Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Center  
 Women's Rehabilitation Center  
 National Campaign for Education Nepal  
 Gramin Kshetra Bikash Karyakaram  
 GoGo Foundation  
 Association of Community Radio Broadcasters  
 National Forum for Advocacy Nepal  
 Loo Niva Concern Group  
 Alliance for Social Dialogue  
 Democratic Freedom and Human Rights Institute  
 Clean Energy Network  
 Children and Women in Social Services and Human Rights  
 National Disaster Management Network of Nepal  
 National Association of PLHA in Nepal  
 National Network for Safe Migration  
 Baal Kshetra Nepal  
 Nepal Indigenous Disabled Association  
 National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal  
 Youth Federation of Indigenous Nationalities Nepal  
 Jagriti Child and Youth Concern Nepal  
 Shakti Samuha  
 INHURED International  
 RDN Nepal  
 Rural Institution for Community Development 

# Augment Women's Presence in Nepali Media

## Background

**G**iving continuity to the last three months' monitoring of media contents and byline in terms of women's presence, Freedom Forum, in the recent three months – January, February and March – of the year 2017, went through a total of 1080 news items from different nine daily newspapers including five Nepali and four English published from the capital city.

The objective of the monitoring is to draw data as number of female bylines, number of male bylines and number of male/female as news sources. The data reveals the representation of women in Nepali media. Also, the news stories categorized as stereotypical and challenging stereotypes are briefly described here. This report, however, does not give comprehensive picture of male-female representation in Nepali media since it has looked on two points- nameless byline and news contents.

Importantly, it draws the comparison between the male and female in byline and news sources, which can be a point for further analysis and research to explore truth as to why female presence is lower in Nepali media.

This activity is conducted with the financial support from the Free Press Unlimited (FPU), a foundation based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, working on freedom of expression issues across the world.

At a time women empowerment has emerged as an important matter of advocacy by various sectors in Nepal, FF hopes this report provides evidences for the media to further their efforts for increasing participation of women in media, one of the most vibrant arenas that help bring forth women's opinion and views in the fore front.

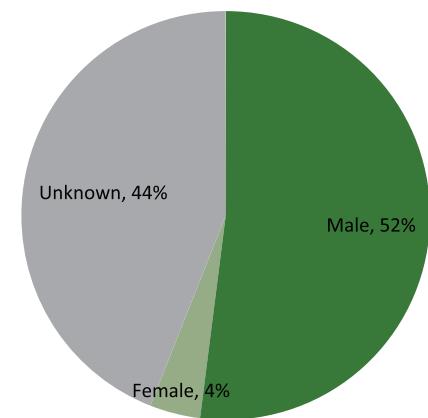
The previous report highlighted meager representation of women in comparison to men in the major media outlets. Women journalists and quoted sources in the news contents comprised only 13.4% and 10.4% respectively. However, data in this report is expected to depict almost equal share for both men and women.

## Key points

- Among the news contents monitored, 92% contained male and only 8% female journalists in byline.
- Nagarik daily constituted highest number of male names in byline whereas Annapurna Post contained the highest number of female names.
- On quoted news sources, 91% were men and only 9% were women.
- Republica comprised maximum number of women as news sources while Gorkhapatra took maximum number of men as sources.
- News coverage on political and governmental issues was found to be 55% contrary to only 2% on entertainment.
- Almost 59% male and 41% female journalists reported political and governmental affairs whereas, only 22% males and 33% females reported social and legal issues.
- Total 52 stories warrant further analysis among which 22 were stories about women and 20 challenged stereotype.

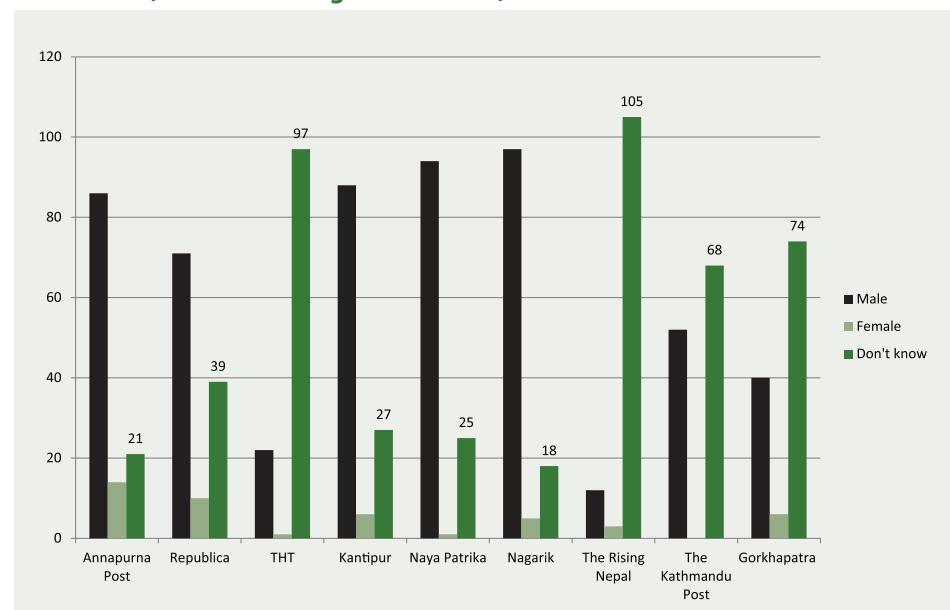
## Methodology

Freedom Forum conducted the weekly monitoring of nine national dailies namely: five Nepali (Kantipur, Nagarik, Gorkhapatra, Annapurna Post and Naya Patrika), and four



English (The Himalayan Times, Republica, The Rising Nepal and The Kathmandu Post). These dailies were selected on the basis of their wider circulation, strong public reach and content diversity. The monitoring was conducted once in a week but on different days in each week considering the need to capture classified media content. First, the contents from nine national dailies were ticked and scanned through gender lenses as how balanced the news are in terms of source, news reporter, reported news/content etc. Eight main news stories from page number first, second, third, fourth and sixth in some outlets were selected from each newspaper and all those news stories were studied to derive variables chosen for the study report. This time,

## Journalists (Who are talking in the media)



news was selected randomly, but priority was accorded to those with byline names within the selected page numbers. Initially, gender of the journalist writing the news (as mentioned in byline) was noted, then the whole story was scanned for appropriate sources; either primary (person) or secondary (reports, data).

If the news contained primary source, both the male and female sources were noted. After that, the story was critically examined whether it dealt with gender (in) equality or stereotypes. In the second phase, all those data were entered into the coding sheet according to the procedures prescribed by FPU. Data were again entered into Microsoft Excel program for further presentation and comparative analysis. This report is prepared on the basis of the analyses of the data derived from tabulation.

### Limitation

The study report does not give a comprehensive picture of women's presence in the selected media. It however observes the news stories (once every week from selected newspapers, eight news items from each, totaling 120 from each newspaper during the period of three months (January to March 2017) in terms of news writer (male, female, unnamed byline), and the news sources. Presence of women as employee in the media house is not incorporated in the report, but, the presence of women in news byline and news source. Similarly, how the women are presented in any news story-stereotypically (submissive, dominated, weaker, traditional role) or not is another point we observed in the particular news stories.

### Figures with brief analysis

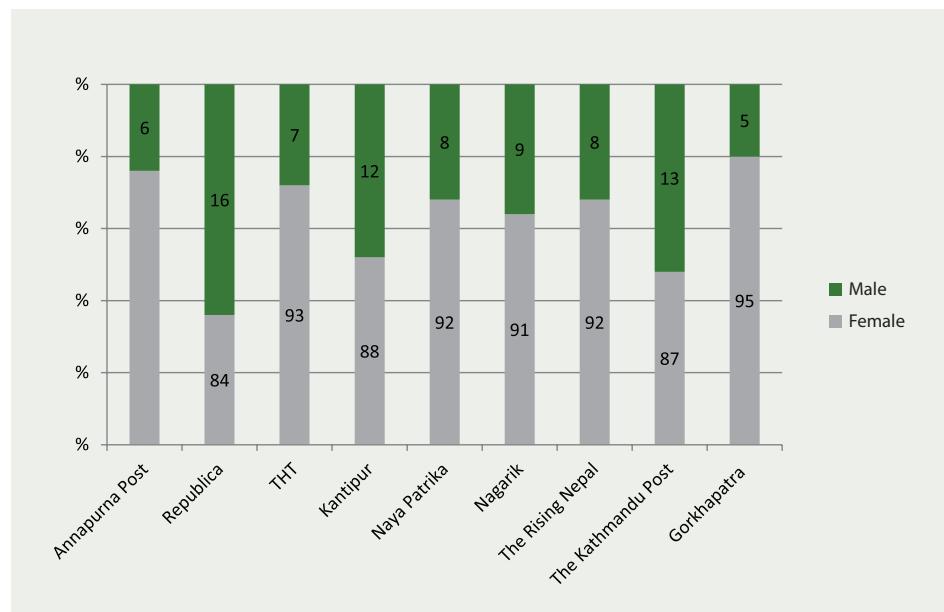
#### 1. Journalists (Who are talking in the media)

Among the media outlets monitored for the byline representation of reporters, Nagarik daily constituted highest number of male names followed by Naya Patrika, Kantipur, Annapurna Post, Republica, The Kathmandu Post, Gorkhapatra, The Himalayan Times (THT) and The Rising Nepal.

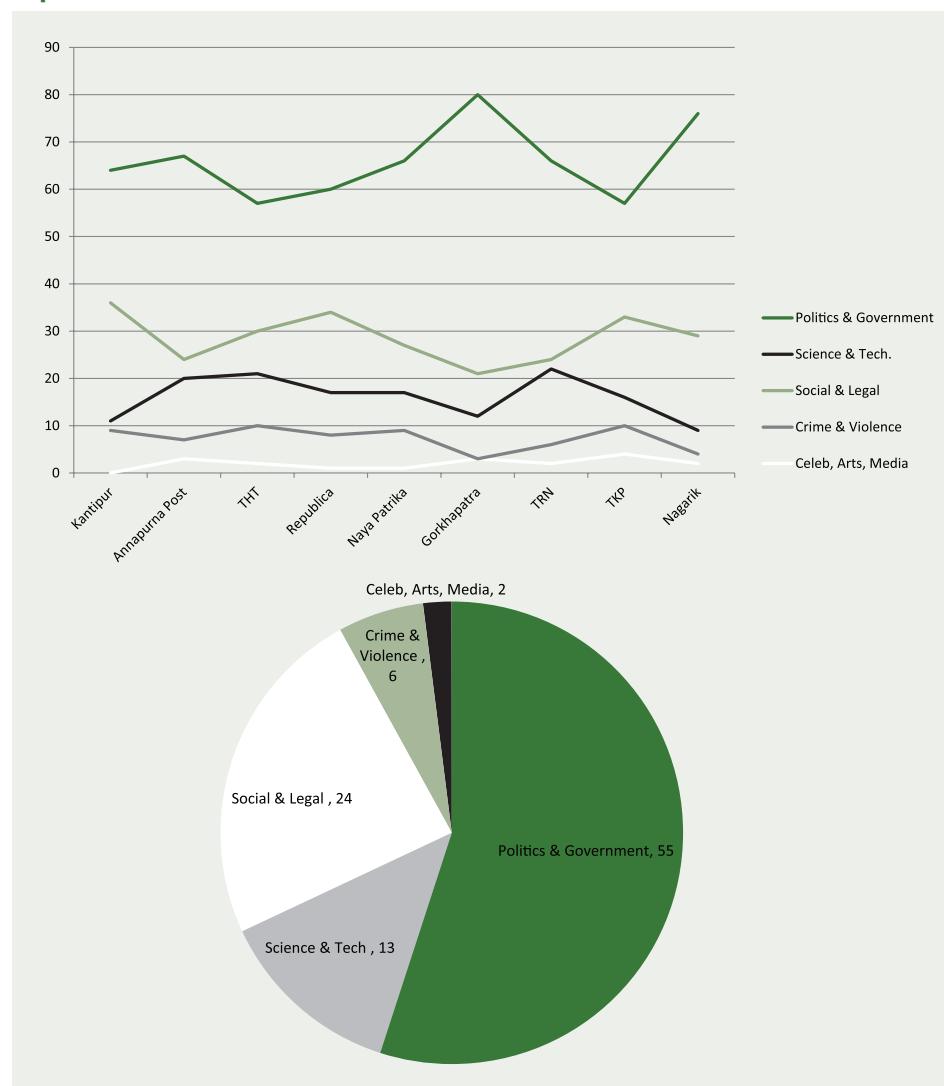
Similarly, Annapurna Post contained the highest number of female names in its content followed by Republica, Gorkhapatra and Kantipur sharing the same, while the Nagarik, the Rising Nepal, and lastly THT and Naya Patrika sharing the same digit. However, The Kathmandu Post failed to include any female reporter's name.

Compared to the previous report, THT which did not have any byline female names contained one this time ("Red Tika challenge takes

#### Sources (Who are talking in the stories)



#### Topic wise distribution



internet by storm", Anita Shrestha, Kathmandu, February 20) while, Annapurna Post contributed highest of all this time as well.

Furthermore, among the nine monitored dailies The Rising Nepal contains maximum number of unknown names in its content as a reporter with the Nagarik contributing to the minimum. Unknown names have been coded as "don't know" in the diagram. This signifies Nagarik includes most of the reporter's name to its contents as byline. Amongst all, male on byline was found to be 52% and females 4% where, remaining 44% contents contained bylines like: Annapurna Post, AFP, Republica, Reuters, Himalayan News Service, Rastriya Samachar Samiti (RSS), Kantipur Reporter, Naya Patrika, Nagarik Reporter, Staff Reporter, Post Report, Gorkhapatra Reporter, etc.

**2. Sources (Who are talking in the stories)**  
Men outnumbered women with 91% among the total sources quoted in the news stories monitored. According to the individual data, Gorkhapatra constituted maximum percentage of male quoted as source whereas, Republica had maximum percentage of female quoted as sources. However comparing in group, Nagarik carried maximum both male and female sources.

Even though most of the stories coded under contents monitored showed inequality among the quoted sources, at least 5 stories showed equality with equal number of men and women sources. The newspapers containing women in the photographs still lack their opinions and views. Stories with more than 3 only male sources have been coded under stories warranting further analysis.

As the atmosphere for election is being created gradually, most of the stories are related to political and governmental affairs. However, they lack women's participation and their views. Either in the news on political dialogue, events or story about women, and any social issues, majority of the stories lacks women's quotes.

As compared to the previous three-month report, Gorkhapatra replaced Republica with maximum men as news sources, whereas, the Republica amazingly contributed to the maximum women as sources in comparison to the least coverage on previous report.

Similarly, some news content were also based on secondary sources like reports, data, appeal, press releases, agreements, bill, constitution provisions, etc.

### 3. Topic wise distribution:

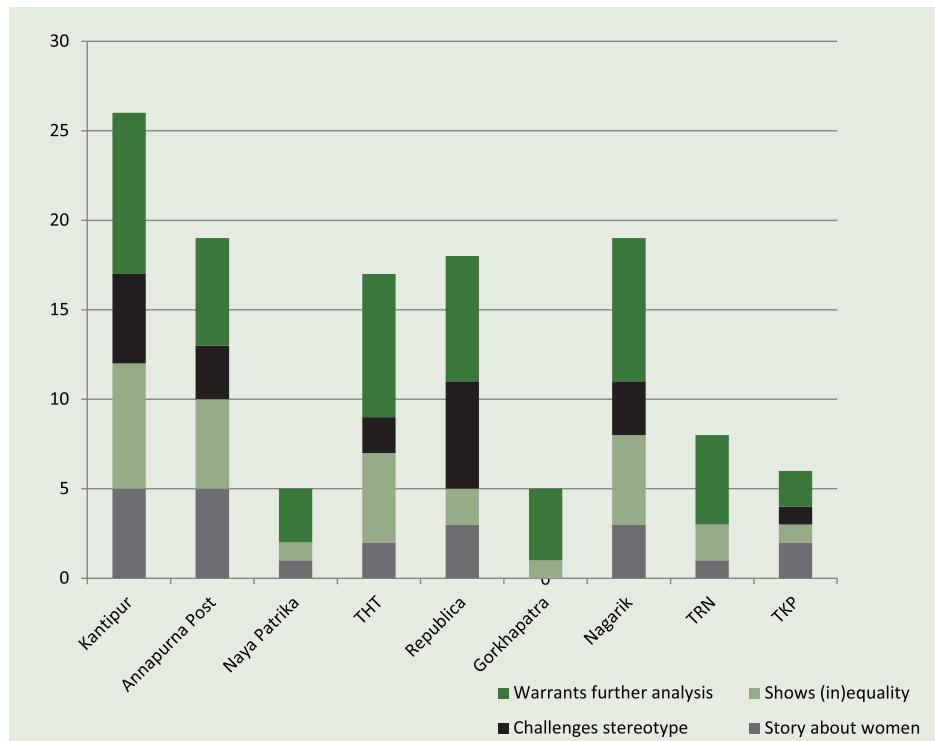
The monitoring period being at the high time of the Election preparation local government restructuring time of Nepal, most of the media outlets covered news based on politics and government the most. However, news on social and legal issues also secured significant position on the main news pages. Because most of the papers contain separate column on entertainment, news on arts, events, celebrities were also found at the lowest proportion.

Among total 1080 news scanned during three months, those relating to politics and government outnumbered other topics by almost 55%. News scanned from the main news pages of the outlets covered social and legal issues to the next followed by science and technology, crime and violence and media, the least. In comparison to the previous report, this time Gorkhapatra being a National newspaper covered almost 81% of the political news.

On the list, amongst others Gorkhapatra (80) covers maximum news from Politics and Government affairs followed by Nagarik. Under the topic social and legal issues, Kantipur (36) covers maximum news among others, similarly under science and technology The Rising Nepal covers maximum and under crime and violence THT and The Kathmandu Post share equal but maximum among others.

Almost 59% male and 41% female journalists reported on political and governmental affairs whereas, only 22% male and 33% females reported on social and legal issues.

### Analysis of the gender based story



#### 4. Stories related to gender issues:

During the monitoring period, new stories demanding gender justice were noted in this section. The news which were found balanced/ imbalanced in terms of quoted sources, displaying gender stereotypes and worth further analysis were noted under various four categories as depicted in the chart below.

Even though most of the stories coded under contents monitored showed inequality among the quoted sources, at least 5 stories showed equality with equal number of men and women sources. The newspapers containing women in the photographs still lack their opinions and views. Stories with more than 3 only male sources have been coded under stories warranting further analysis. Similarly, the news about women victim, violence, their achievement, voices, rights have also been coded under the same category.

Though the circumstances are changing towards gender equity, male stereotypes are the most dominant hence; women's stereotypical challenges have been focused in this study.

According to the data, Kantipur tops the list of stories requiring warrant further analysis followed by THT and Nagarik. In some cases, even though stories challenged stereotype, they did not warrant analysis, as for example: speech of women President, House speaker, candidates, etc. Among total, 22 news stories were about women and their stories where 20 challenged stereotype of women (explanation included below on the next section) and 29 showed (in) equality.

#### 5. Stories warranting further analysis:

News stories being coded on the basis of gender imbalance were further analyzed through four gender perspectives as specified above. Few of the stories have been described here below:-

##### Headlines:

###### a. Youths celebrate International Nepali Topi Day (THT, Kathmandu, January 1)

The story is about Nepali youths celebrating Topi Day wearing Nepali cap (*Dhaka Topi*). In the story we can see a picture of young girls and boys wearing cap but neither of them has been quoted in the story itself but yet we can find 4 men sources. Hence, the news shows inequality in terms of sources.

###### b. Agricultural tractors misused as carriers on Chure excavation (Nagarik, Siraha, January 1)

The story is based on duty free vehicles provided under Government quota to the farmers which have been used as carriers of sand, stones

in Chure excavation. It is based upon the illegal excavation of the area and misuse by businessmen in Siraha. The story has 7 male sources but no any women source hence, draws attention towards further analysis.

###### c. Family with 6 blinds: (*Republica, Rajbiraj, January 6*)

The story is about a poor family of Rajbiraj in Nepal where 6 of the members are blind and cannot do anything for raising the family. Besides, the family's responsibility is being undertaken by Sukumaridevi, a female who is also disabled but not blind and hence, is a sole bread winner of family. In such a poor and deprived family, a disabled woman earns for their living which clearly challenges stereotype and hence, warrants further analysis.

###### d. Community schools premier (Kantipur, Bara, January 18)

The news is about a school in Kapilvastu which also provides computer education for female guardians at school after student's class. Elderly housewives of the remote place being educated with computer seem to clearly challenge existing stereotype of women.

###### e. Pregnant woman earning by breaking stones (*Annapurna post, Ilam, February 8*)

The story is about the miserable condition of a 19 yr old pregnant Sangita Panchkoti who is compelled to break stones for 6 hours daily to earn the living. She got married early, lives in a slum and works along with her father-in-law because they do not have any other way of earning. Such a condition of a pregnant woman who deserves utmost care depressingly addresses stereotypical notion.

###### f. Missing girl, 7, found murdered (*The Kathmandu Post, Kapilvastu, February 14*)

In the news, a 7 year old girl who was found dead was suspected to be murdered after being raped. Even though locals later protested demanding probe into the matter and Police is ongoing investigation, such insecurity for even a minor female in the society is an alarming condition which clearly depicts gender stereotype and inequality.

###### g. NC has responsibility to hold polls: Deuba (*The Rising Nepal, Kathmandu, March 13*)

The news covers speech from various political leaders during an event where words of 6 politicians have been incorporated but no any women politicians has been quoted. Despite presence of women in the politics, news fails to include their voices. This clearly shows inequality from gender perspective.



The story describes about a campaign 'Red Tika challenge' organized by widows where they should wear a red tika and post pictures on the Facebook page which had received immense response. Hence, the story clearly challenges stereotype where women themselves are aware of their interests and rights and can transform societal taboos.



###### b. 70 yr old Chepang woman receives nepali citizenship (*NayaPatrika, Gorkha, March 9*)

In this news, an elderly woman belonging to the excluded group (Chepang) receives Nepali citizenship from CDO. It was her husband who helped to provide her citizenship. She was scared of coming into public and facing other. Without citizenship they cannot receive old-age allowance, but the woman can now get all facilities of a citizen because of her husband. Hence, the story though perpetuated stereotype focuses on status of Chepang woman.

###### i. Traffic jam in Kalanki (*Gorkhapatra, Kathmandu, January 1*)

The news is about traffic jam and dust in the Kalanki area which has worsened due to leaky drainpipe on the roads. Regarding the pollution and difficulties being faced by the locals, more than 4 men have expressed their views but no any woman's voice has been included in the news. This also shows inequality among the quoted sources.

*j. Red Tika Challenge takes internet by storm (THT, Kathmandu, February 21)*

The news is based on changing the mentality of social stigma towards widows that they should not wear colorful dresses and do make-up. The story describes about a campaign 'Red Tika challenge' organized by widows where they should wear a red tika and post pictures on the Facebook page which had received immense response. Hence, the story clearly challenges stereotype where women themselves are aware of their interests and rights and can transform societal taboos.

**Opportunities and Learning:**

Through monitoring content of media outlets on gender issues, Freedom Forum has built strong base on advocating for gender equality on media. Previously, the tool was provided by FPU and was used under its project but even after completion of the program FF has been continuously monitoring thus, capacitating its organizational objectives. As per the review and suggestions received from the previous report,

most of the media houses have considerable women as working journalists but this analytical report would be a helpful tool in realization of maintaining gender equality in media contents too.

**Recommendations**

- Stories about women and those containing women in the pictures should also include their opinions and views.
- Even in the political and other social stories, inclusion of women's voice/quote will bring forth their perspectives as well as depict equality as the number of women.
- Incorporating the byline names of journalists may decrease unknown list and also reveal participation of more men and women journalists thus, deviating the curve.
- As most of the news still perpetuate gender stereotype either for male or female, reporting format should be changed deviating towards throwing light upon the cases where men also replace women at their work.

**Conclusion:**

The three month study of the contents revealed meager representation of women in Nepali media contents. Among total 1080 news scanned, only 52 warranted further analyses upon gender perspectives. Women journalists and source comprise only 8% and 9% respectively. Overall, news on politics and government was found dominant. During the election preparatory phase of the country where most of the stories are related to political and governmental issues, they still lack women's participation and views. Among the nine dailies, Annapurna revealed maximum inclusion of females as reporters and Republica revealed maximum inclusion of female as sources. Almost 59% male and 41% female journalists reported on political and governmental issues whereas, only 22% male and 33% females reported on social and legal issues. Conclusively, in comparison to the previous report considerable changes have been recorded in the contents representation of gender. 

*Continued from Page 1*

Editor at the Samcharpatra daily, Kapil Kafle, said good content in media could bring tremendous change in society. Every news and information that media get should be verified before printing. Smooth functioning of democracy can be realized on the media content, he added.

Executive Chief Taranath Dahal said the program was organized not only to remember the historic day the country got the democracy with the liberation from the autocratic Rana regime, but also to evaluate the days and struggles waged after 2007BS to nurture the democratic values with the exercise of the freedom of expression. "Media has not only nurtured the democratic values but also contributed tremendously to bring change in people's lives. However, there are still more efforts needed to make the media more professional and independent," he underlined.

General Secretary at FF, Dharmendra Jha, opined that media was functioning a vital pillar of democracy in Nepal since the historic moment of 2007BS. However, the lack of political culture among the political parties have created problems times and again, he added, underscoring the need of media to bring the political behavior to track.

Shreeram Poudel, a Mass Communications teacher at Tribhuvan University underscored the importance of independent media and its content. Without independent media, democracy can not serve to the changing priorities of the people and country, he added.

ed, focusing that logical and effective contents help recognize the strength of media, he added.

Media lawyer Tanka Aryal said that although there are 1,000 media in Nepal, there were very few media voicing for citizen's independence. Media content needs to be reviewed to make media more professional.

Advocate Bishnu Pokhrel, senior journalist Hasta Gurung, and university teacher Dr Sudhamshu Dahal, expressed their views on importance of the National Democracy Day relating to freedom of expression and opinion. The program was facilitated by FF Chairman Hari Binod Adhikari.

The program was attended by total a of 30 participants from various sectors: legal authorities (Advocate, Attorney Office), representatives from Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), Nepal Press Council, academia, media experts, academicians, journalists and researchers. 

**Media has not only nurtured the democratic values but also contributed tremendously to bring change in people's lives. However, there are still more efforts needed to make the media more professional and independent.**

# Freedom Forum's Self Disclosure Update

Type and Nature of Organization	NGO working for Democracy, Right to Information, Freedom of Expression, Fiscal Transparency and Open Data		
Legal Status	Registered at District Administration Office Kathmandu. DAO Registration Number: 127/062/63, SWC Affiliation Number: 18518		
Location	Adarsa Marga, Prasuti Griha Road, Thapathali, Kathmandu		
Staffs and Roles	<p><b>Taranath Dahal:</b> Executive Chief, coordinates overall organizational and administrative affairs</p> <p><b>Krishna Sapkota:</b> Planning and Policy Advisor who is responsible for project design and planning and provides advisory support on policy affairs.</p> <p><b>Narayan Ghimire:</b> Media Monitoring Officer, who coordinates media focused initiatives</p> <p><b>Aruna Adhikari:</b> Finance and Administration Officer, looks after accounting and administrative affairs and performs responsibilities as the Information Officer.</p> <p><b>Nanu Maiya Khadka:</b> Gender Monitoring Officer, responsible for monitoring media content on gender perspectives</p> <p><b>Kumar Chaulagain:</b> Program Assistant</p> <p><b>Manju Ojha:</b> Media Monitoring Assistant</p> <p><b>Rita Mangranti:</b> Office Assistant</p>		
	<p><b>Project Staffs:</b>  <b>Sanjeeb Ghimire</b>- Project Manager-EEMIR Project  <b>Bhawana Poddar</b>- Program Officer-EEMIR Project  <b>Bobbish Dhakal</b>- Associate Finance Officer-EEMIR Project</p>		
Ongoing Project Information	Project Name	Supporting Agency	Date of Signing the Contract
	Open Budget Survey 2017	IBP	7 June 2015
	Enable Environment for Media Law Reforms and Improved RTI Practice (EEMIR) (CS-MAP)	FHI 360	30 Dec 2016
Services Offered/ Activities Carried Out	Research, capacity development and policy advocacy including media monitoring, trainings on RTI and journalism, meetings, workshops, seminars and other campaigns to promote issues of democracy, RTI, FoE, fiscal transparency, human rights, local governance. It also provides legal aid to journalists, media and information seekers.		
Responsible Authority	<b>Chairperson:</b> Hari Binod Adhikari		
Decision Making Process	<p><b>General Assembly:</b> Making policies, rules and regulations of organization</p> <p><b>Executive committee:</b> Formulation of action plans as per constitution of organization, rules and regulation</p> <p><b>Management team:</b> Running projects and daily operational affairs and reporting timely to the Executive Committee.</p>		
Past and Current Activities	Please follow the link: <a href="http://freedomforum.org.np/content/category/activities/">http://freedomforum.org.np/content/category/activities/</a>		
Information officer	<b>Aruna Adhikari</b>		
Financial Information	Freedom Forum received grants announcing Rs. 1912244.36		
Official Website	<a href="http://www.freedomforum.org.np">www.freedomforum.org.np</a>		
Publications of Freedom Forum	Freedom Forum has over 50 Publications (printed) Please Follow the Link: <a href="http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/">http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/</a>		
Annual Report	<a href="http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/reports/annual-reports/">http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/reports/annual-reports/</a>		
Mechanism for Information Dissemination	Websites- <a href="http://www.freedomforum.org.np/">http://www.freedomforum.org.np/</a> ; <a href="http://www.nepalpressfreedom.org">www.nepalpressfreedom.org</a> , and Newsletter-Free Expression		

## Congratulations

- Freedom Forum congratulates its Vice Chairperson Mr. Sahaj Man Shrestha on being elected the Steering Committee Member of Internet Rights & Principles Coalition (IRPC). The IPRC is an open network of individuals and organizations based at the UN Internet Governance Forum

- (IGF) committed to making human rights and principles work for the online environment.
- Freedom Forum congratulates and welcomes the new staff members appointed under the 'Enabling Environment for Media Reforms and Improved RTI Practices' FF implemented as part of the USAID-funded

and FHI360 led Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project (CS MAP). In this project, Mr Sanjeeb Ghimire and Ms. Bobbish Dhakal were appointed as Project Manager and Associate Finance Officer, respectively, on behalf of Freedom Forum, effective from 15 January 2017. 

# World's Press Calls on US President Trump to Stop Targeting Media

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum (WEF), have expressed our deep concern at recent comments made by US President Donald Trump and his administration targeting news media. Combined with the exclusion of selected news outlets from a recent White House press briefing, the WAN-IFRA and the WEF feared that the overall climate for media freedom currently being fostered by Trump presidency seriously jeopardises the on-going ability of a free press to hold power to account in the United States.

"We are dismayed to hear your frequent comments since being elected to office disparaging media and targeting individual outlets - seemingly for no other reason than personal retribution for critical reporting of you or your administration. We remind you that it is the role of a free press, protected under the 1st Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America, and Article 19 of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to subject government and the actions of elected officials to the highest standards of scrutiny and accountability," stated a press release issued on 27 March 2017.

The highlighted one particular comment, among many, that Trump chose to articulate via the Twitter platform, the sentiments of which he then repeated during a speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference held on February 24th 2017:

**'Fake news'**, more appropriately termed **'disinformation'**, is indeed provoking a crisis among professional news media institutions throughout the world.

"The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!"



Such an accusation, they said, is immensely damaging on a number of levels. Firstly, 'fake news', more appropriately termed 'disinformation', is indeed provoking a crisis among professional news media institutions throughout the world. Addressing the question of how the professional media responds to the growing phenomenon is one of the highest priorities for our members. It is deeply unhelpful, however, to see the President of the United States of America fuelling antagonism towards news outlets by labelling them - misleadingly - as 'fake news'. In reality, the organisations cited by Trump in this particular tweet adhere to the highest professional and ethical standards, and it is disingenuous to suggest they contribute to the current 'fake news' epidemic.

They further expressed worry that the effects of deliberate attempts to spread disinformation have been seen to influence election processes, alter policy, and surface unprecedented hatreds and growing resentment between peoples; all of

which contribute to the division of communities. The causes, as well as the appropriate responses required to counter disinformation are being analysed by newsrooms globally, particularly in terms of what this means for professional media and the practice of journalism.

"The media will find a response that continues to valorise the work of professional journalists and allows the public to filter facts from fiction. However, differentiating between those that apply such standards and the organisations, blogging sites, social media commentators, etc., that do not, is very much part of the core challenge ahead regarding tackling disinformation," they underscored.

WAN-IFRA was founded in 1948 by the remnants of the independent European press who recognised media had - in light of the rise of violent populism and the horrors that it brought during the Second World War - to a large extent failed in its responsibility to protect democratic values on the continent. The organisation based its core principles around the notion that a free, independent press is the cornerstone of democratic society, and that without a vibrant, financially healthy and courageous media our communities would again be left exposed to the kind of tyranny and persecution witnessed in the lead up to, and during the years of conflict that so ravaged the world.

*It is an excerpt of a letter sent to the US administration on behalf of the Executive Committee, World Editors Forum and Media Freedom boards of the Paris-based World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) on 27 March 2017.*

(Source: <https://mailings.wan-ifra.org/vm.php?m=4385&u=5ceb78c2b73b87d7884a285c5ca695ce>)

Freedom Forum is an independent, non-governmental and not-for-profit civil society organization working for the cause of social accountability, democracy and human rights focused on press freedom, freedom of expression and right to information in Nepal. Incepted in 2005, Freedom Forum has emerged as a prominent national organization in promoting access to information and freedom of expression through dialogue, research, training, public advocacy and campaign and programme implementation. Currently, the organization is working on the issues of public finance management, budget transparency, open data and aid governance, political and parliamentary accountability, freedom of expression online and open government partnership (OGP) based on its on-hand experience and learning.

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