



FreeExpression

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A NEWSLETTER OF FREEDOM FORUM

1st Internet Governance Forum in Nepal **Open, Secure, Safe Internet**

Freedom Forum engaged actively in the two-day Internet Governance Forum held in Kathmandu from August 18 to 19, 2017. The event was first of its kind held in Nepal. Throughout the mega event, FF participated in different sessions as moderators, speakers and active listeners and debater, so that the issues around the internet ecosystem were propelled and the participants agitated to what discussions.

During the session, “Internet Rights and Freedom of Expression”, on the second day of the IGF, FF Executive Chief Mr Taranath Dahal spoke of the need to augment the use of internet to promote freedom of expression online.

“Internet has played a significant role to promote people’s rights, especially the freedom of expression worldwide. As a developing country, Nepal needs to build infrastructures to ensure the fastest and most convenient medium of exercising the FoE,” he said, informing the participants that FF was reviewing the school curricula (from grade 5 to 12) to assess whether Nepal’s formal education has introduced digital/internet literacy.

On the occasion, he reminded the audience about the FoE and information on the internet in the charter of human rights and principles for the internet issued by the Internet Rights and Principle Coalition as:

- a) Freedom of online protest
- b) Freedom from censorship
- c) Right to Information
- d) Freedom of the media



e) Freedom from the hate speech
The session was moderated by FF’s Vice-Chair Mr Sahajman Shrestha. He whetted the discussion facilitating on the queries from the audience and the views from the speakers.

FF’s Executive Member Santosh Sigdel said due to the lack of sufficient infrastructures, the FoE online was yet to be promoted in Nepal. However, there were multifarious issues around FoE online including online harassment, and arrest of citizens over FoE practice online.

Media Monitoring Officer Mr Narayan Ghimire said time had come for Nepal to take timely initiative to narrow down digital divide, otherwise people without digital literacy could be deprived of exercising FoE online. Internet must not be limited as a tool to empower already empowered and a tool of the elites, he argued.

Similarly, on the first day of the IGF, Legal

Officer at Freedom, Ms Ashmita Pokhrel, was a panelist on the session named, “Initiating a Youth Platform for Internet Governance.”

Ms Pokhrel said the legal protection of youth on internet had been imperative in Nepal too. She also summarized about the laws and policies she was studying at FF. “As the youths are leading group of internet users, their skills and knowledge on the laws governing internet should be enhanced,” she stressed. A person from the audience suggested her to study the frauds on online shopping.

FF also took part enthusiastically on various sessions, including IPV4 to IPV6: How prepared Nepal is? FF during the IGF stressed the need of open, transparent, secured and safe internet for building good governance. IGF Nepal-2017 ended with the collective commitment for collaboration among multi-stakeholders for the advancement of internet, expansion of internet accessibility and reaping multiple benefits. 🌱

Message from Executive Chief

The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 16.10, has recognized guarantee of public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms in accordance with national legislation and international agreements as part of the targets for measuring their implementation. The SDG Goal 16.10 (1) is about the safety of journalists which has the global indicators such as number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months. Similarly, Goal 16.10 (2) deals with the issue of access to information with indicators including number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information.

However, Nepal's Sustainable Development Goals Baseline Report-2017 prepared and published by the National Planning Commission (NPC), the significant government agency to see national policies and planning, has presented targets and indicators of the safety of journalists and access to information but not any baseline. Without any concrete baseline reference, there may be no objective measurement of progress or achievement in this area.

It is imperative for the Nepal government to set the indicators, sub-indicators, targets and baseline on its own bearing in mind the specific need and context of the country, being committed to the international agreements. Other goals and targets of the SDGs will not be achieved with the weak status of media and people's access to information as strengthening the later does not only limit to goal 16.10 (1 and 2) but it is equally important to increase oversight of the implementation of all other goals and targets. Hence, the objective evaluation has paramount importance.

Only the safe environment for journalists helps ensure a free and accountable press. It is the free press which can verify and validate the objective implementation of all other goals. In regard to the benchmark of safety of journalists, the UNESCO set an indicator i.e. number of countries promoting fundamental freedoms through ensuring the protection of journalists and combating impunity for attacks on them. Similarly, Global Forum for Media Development has emphasized on implementing the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

The Plan of Action aims to creating of a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers with a view to strengthening peace, democracy and development worldwide. Its measures include the establishment of a coordinated inter-agency mechanism to handle issues related to the safety of journalists as well as assisting countries to develop legislation and mechanisms favourable to freedom of expression and information. The Plan recommends working in cooperation



with governments, media houses, professional associations and NGOs to conduct awareness raising campaigns on a wide range of issues such as existing international instruments and conventions, the growing dangers posed by emerging threats to media professionals.

In addition to this, the 'prevent, protect and prosecute' paradigm developed by Article 19 can also be a good reference for Nepal while developing baseline and indicators along with future plans for safety of journalists. The paradigm mainly focuses on enabling environment for journalists; ensuring national laws do not interfere with journalist's independence, releasing arbitrarily arrested and detained journalists, protecting journalists' confidentiality sources and condemning violence and attacks against journalists. Among other focuses are establishing early warning and rapid response mechanism, regularly monitoring and reporting on attack against journalists, protecting media outlets against attack and forced closure, adopting strategies to combat impunity, putting in place investigation and prosecution.

In regard to the access to information, various international organizations like Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD), Canda and Access Info Europe have developed frameworks for assessing the implementation of Right to Information.

Freedom Forum takes it that the issues of safety of journalists and access to information are the central elements of SDG. It urges the concerned agency to pay adequate attention to mainstream the agenda into the national plan and programs. Incorporation of clear, comprehensive and disaggregated national baseline in NPC documents helps bring all sectors and boost partnership mechanism among government and CSO. FF also points out the need of forming two separate working groups- one on safety of journalists and another on access to information, so that a comprehensive national advocacy could be charted out from the end of CSOs working on the issues. 🌱

Taranath Dahal

OGP for responsive governance

Various speakers have underlined the need for the country to join the Open Government Partnership (OGP) — a global movement promoting the values of transparency, accountability, participation and technological innovation.

At an interaction program 'Open Government Partnership: Status and Way Forward' organized by the Good Governance Committee of the Legislature-Parliament with support from UNDP on August 30, the speakers stressed that the country should reinforce its official commitment to take the agenda of open governance which calls for collaboration between the government and CSOs.



Presenting a paper on 'OGP and Role of Parliamentarians', Chief Information Commissioner of the National Information Commission Mr Krishna Hari Baskota said that Nepal government should not make any delay to brace up the values of OGP to give people effective governance. Similarly, delivering paper on 'OGP and Role of CSOs', Freedom Forum's Executive Chief Mr Taranath Dahal urged the parliamentarians to push the agenda of broader governance transformation through OGP. President of Parliamentary Good Governance and Monitoring Committee Mohan Singh Rathor said the Committee would take stride on joining OGP after further discussions within the committee and consultations with experts.

UNDP Deputy Country Director Sophie Kemkhadze said as OGP could be a support pillar to leverage strengths for achieving Sustainable Development Goals Nepal could take benefits from the global movement to create sustainable and resilient society. As many as 60 participants including parliamentarians, CSO representatives, media, academia and tech scientists provided their inputs to the theme of open government partnership. 🌱

Press Freedom Violations

Barred from reporting

A. Journalists from different media houses were barred entering the vote counting places thereby hindering the factual reporting on the ongoing vote count of the second phase of local election in Bhojpur on June 29, a day after the voting.

Kantipur television reporter from Bhojpur, Kiran Rai, informed Freedom Forum, saying, “When we (a reporter each from Kantipur daily, Nagarik daily, Annapurna Post daily, Naya Patrika daily and Ujijalo online) went to collect news on the vote count of local elections from the office of the Chief Election Officer, Bhojpur, we were not allowed to enter the counting area. The security persons did not allow us entering there.”

Moreover, Chief District Officer Gomadevi Chemjong told the reporters not to enter the counting room and nor they could take any photos because, she argued, the administration was asked to do so from the top officials.

B. Media persons along with election observers were denied entry to vote counting premises on July 1 in Nawalparasi, 3 days after the local level election. Talking to Freedom Forum, Vijay FM 101.6 MHz's Editor-In-Chief, Dhrubamani Poudel, said, “Due to a dispute among political representatives, vote counting process stopped for almost three hours in the office of Bardaghat Municipality. After that, showing security reasons election officers, barred us (ten media persons from -Gorkhapatra, Daunne FM, Butwal Today, Suanaul FM, Triveni TV, Vijay FM and other local media) from entering the premises. However, reporters with two State-owned media- Radio Nepal and National News Agency (RSS) -were given access to the site.”

He further said they had to wait for 4 to 5 hours to report vote count update. They even requested with Assistant Chief District Officer Madhab Prasad Dhungana but he did not respond to problem reasoning it's the responsibility of election officers.

C. Senior reporters with Janata television Madan Dhungana and Suman Chapagain along with two camerapersons were denied entering into TU stadium on 2 July over the news on match fixing the television broadcast on 30 June (Friday).

During a conversation with Freedom Forum, news coordinator of Janata TV, Ram Kumar Elan, said, “Despite pre-information about their plan to stop our reporters at the gate of stadium because of the news broadcast two days ago, our senior reporters Madan Dhungana and Suman Chapagain with two camera persons reached TU stadium at 11 am. But they were not allowed to enter the premises for reporting as expected.”

He added that the organizers seemed to be nervous after the news on match fixing broadcast on Janata TV two days ago. At the same time, National Sports Council's Member-Secretary Keshav Bista tried to convince the organizer but they did not allow entry.

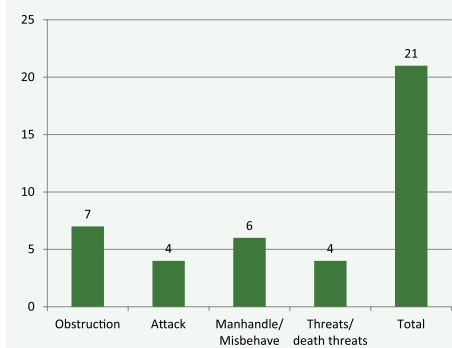
D. Journalists from private media were barred entering into the Office of the President for reporting of the oath taking ceremony of new ministers in Kathmandu on July 26. Kathmandu lies in Province 3. However, responding to Freedom Forum's query, Secretary at President's Office, Bhupendra Prasad Poudyal replied, “We don't have any strict provision against entry of private media during the programs; the small size of hall is the main reason for restricting entry of many persons.

However, five media persons from State-owned media -Nepal TV (2), National News Agency (1), Gorkhapatra (1) and Radio Nepal (1) had access to the program. Security persons barred journalists' entry reasoning order from 'high level'. “We have not issued any such order to bar journalists”, reiterated Secretary Poudyal.

E. Journalists Bishnu Aryal of Republica daily and Basanta Khadka of Nagarik daily were barred from entering the office of the State-owned Sajha Publications on July 25, following their reporting which exposed huge financial irregularities done by General Manager and Chairman of the Publications Dolindra Prasad Sharma. Office security guard at the Sajha Publications barred Aryal and Khadka from going inside the office, reasoning the order from the General Manager Sharma, while they were visiting the office for follow up of their news reporting.

Aryal and Khadka said the gatekeeper told them that GM Sharma had ordered him not to allow any journalists in the office. Earlier, the

TYPES OF VIOLATIONS



two journalists had published news exposing huge irregularities at Sajha Publications and involvement of GM Sharma. However, Sharma told the newspaper later he had not directed the guards to bar journalists from entering the Sajha Publications.

The incident shows how the journalists reporting the investigative cases as of irregularities and corruption face obstructions.

F. Election officer forcefully grabbed the camera of Rautahat based- correspondent with Mountain Television Rakesh Yadav and deleted the pictures while reporting vote count on September 19. Rautahat lies in Province No 2 where third phase of local level poll was successfully concluded on September 18. Talking to Freedom Forum, Reporter Yadav said, “The situation was tense at the place of vote count of Garuda municipality following the dispute among political representatives. At 8:30 pm, when I reached the counting place, security officers did not let me enter. Then I started reporting from outside the room. Meanwhile, a woman Inspector asked me to shut the camera.”

He further said, “I argued that I was taking pictures at other vote count places as well, then why not here! Thereafter, Assistant Election Officer approached me saying no one was allowed to click at vote counting center. But I did not stop reporting.” With this argument, Election Officer Nabin Kumar Joshi asked reporter Yadav to delete the pictures. He forcefully grabbed the reporter's camera and deleted all pictures. 📸

Reporters/media house attacked

A. District reporter from Bajura district with Image Television, Chhakka Bahadur Malla, was attacked by an unknown gang on 13 July while returning home in the headquarters Martadi at 2:30 pm. Bajura district lies in Province No 7 of Nepal.

In a conversation with Freedom Forum, Malla said, "While I was returning home from Bajura's headquarters Martadi after a meeting with municipality and election officers, a group of 15-20 persons came all of sudden and attacked me. Meanwhile, when I tried to escape myself and run across, the attackers hit on my head and different parts of my body."

According to Malla, the gang was under the leadership of a person named, Nar Bahadur Raut, who usually threaten and torture the locals of Bajura. Even after showing the identity card the gang did not stop, added Malla. Along with Malla, some locals and municipality officers were also trapped by the gang. He lodged a complaint at the Metropolitan Police Office, Bajura, informing about the incident and the gang has been arrested as well.

B. Correspondent with Radio Paurakhi 90.4 broadcast from Bajura Devendra Nath was pelted stones by unknown group while reporting on vote counting on 30 June.

He informed, "A group of locals threw stones on me outside the vote counting site. However, I escaped major injuries. Later, the attackers apologized for attack," shared the reporter.

Security intimidates online media

Police persons suddenly entered the office of an online news portal—newsabhiyan.com—in Kathmandu in order to 'enquire about the proof and news content' published on the portal on August 5, 2017. Kathmandu is the capital city and lies in Province 3 of Nepal.

Immediately after the incident, Editor-In-Chief Chhaya Chandra Bhandari informed Freedom Forum's media monitoring desk saying, "I had been continuously publishing news about the irregularities by anti-graft body CIAA chief on the news portal. In this context, today, Police Inspector Hari Bahadur Basnet and Sub-Inspector of Police Kishor Karki in plain clothes suddenly visited the office and asked why I wrote such news. They asked to disclose the proof and source of the news." After 25 minutes, they left the office, informed Bhandari adding that he expressed concern with senior police official.

C. Some local political cadres attacked the Radio Budinanda 96.5 MHz on July 14 (Friday) at 11:00 pm.

Talking to Freedom Forum, Radio's Managing Director Anil Shahi said, "While all our staffs were about to close the station before leaving for home, a group of Nepali Congress party cadres started throwing stones on the building. Even though we escaped major injuries, station's electric circuit was damaged. Hence, the station remained closed for some days."

A complaint was lodged in the nearby police station. Due to the attack, media house suffered loss of around Rs 300,000 thus, affecting 11 media persons working there. On FF's question about the reason for attack, journalist Giri said that the place was always hostile to media; hence this was a conspiracy to suppress the media. Later, despite signing on the agreement to provide compensation to the media house, concerned group has not provided any yet. However, radio station commenced its service after a month on its own.

D. Editor with the Naya Bidroha weekly, Bhavna Prasai 'Bidrohi', was attacked in the night of September 20 in capital city, Kathmandu. The weekly is published from Kathmandu (Province no. 3).

Talking to Freedom, editor Bidrohi said, "At round 10 pm, a group of people were discussing the political issues near my house. I approached them so as to ease the discussion but one of them aggressively disapproved my opinion and attacked me. Immediately after the attack, I called the Police. Police then dropped me to the hospital. She had to be admitted at the emergency section of Bir Hospital. She got minor injuries on head, neck and face. 🌿

Threats of attack

A. Gopal Bahadur Khadka, Executive Director at Nepal Oil Corporation, the sole body to import and distribute petroleum products and regulate its supply, issued threat of attack on Dilip Poudel, reporter to the Nagarik daily, over the news of financial irregularities in the purchase of land by the NOC on August 4.

Quoting reporter Poudel, FF's Stringer at Province No 3 and the Poudel's colleague, Ashok Dahal said, "Being angered after the disclosure of irregularities with the news, NOC Executive Director Khadka threatened of finishing Poudel's journalism career." "You also may have your family. Don't you need their protection," said

Executive Director Khadka to reporter Poudel on the office premises of the NOC Office. Reporter Poudel had reached the NOC to collect follow up news on the land purchase. Two weeks back, reporter Poudel had disclosed that Rs 670 million could have been embezzled in the purchase of land by NOC. The incident shows how horrible the atmosphere is for the reporters who write investigative news- the news on irregularities and corruption in Nepal! Reporter Poudel was threatened in the NOC premises, which signals the journalists are unsafe even within the capital city.

B. Reporters with Nayapatrika daily, Umesh Poudel and Janardan Baral, were issued threats of attack over the news the daily published on September 11, in Kathmandu. Kathmandu, the capital city, lies in Province No 3 of Nepal. Talking to Freedom Forum, Nayapatrika's Bureau Chief Janardan Baral said, "Before

publishing the news on 'Networking business fraud through gravity currency', I called Gyan Prasad Poudel to put his quote in the news but he threatened me not to publish the news. However, the news was published; thereafter he called Umesh Poudel by mobile at 7:30 am and threatened of using his power and connections even from 'high-level security officials' to attack them."

Gyan Prasad Paudel is a marketing chief of the networking business which is illegal in Nepal. Again, few minutes later a person named Jitendra (calling himself a party cadre) called on my mobile and threatened, "I do not know what news you have published but GP Poudel has filed a case against journalists. So why did you write the news about him?", added Baral. The journalists complained at the police office and provided the mobile numbers of those issuing threats of attack. 🌿

Manhandles

A. Reporter with Kantipur daily, Anish Tiwari, was manhandled by local level representatives while reporting in Sindhupalchowk on July 19. Sindhupalchowk is a neighbouring district to Kathmandu and lies in Province 3.

Talking to Freedom Forum, reporter Anish Tiwari shared, "Bhotekoshi's rural municipal chief Dipendra Kumar Shrestha accused all the journalists including me of writing news by taking bribes. I replied him that he could not blame all the journalists on the basis of some foul cases. Then he shouted, 'Ok, I will see what you will write in the news and spoke foul on me.' However, other leaders apologized with the journalists on their behalf, informed Tiwari.

B. Freedom Forum's stringer for Province 4, Rajan Upadhyaya, reported that Pokhara's correspondent with online news portal sancharkendra.com, Astha Nepali, was manhandled by police persons while reporting on August 5, 2017. Pokhara lies on province 4 of Nepal.

Quoting reporter Nepali, stringer Upadhyaya said, "Reporter Nepali was manhandled by the police persons while taking pictures and video of a dispute between police and businesspersons that broke after a theft in a market even under police security. Police Inspector Basanta Sharma leading the team tried to grab the camera of reporter forcefully for taking video."

Despite sporting her press card, some women police said that 'they did not care whoever she was', added stringer quoting reporter Nepali. Deputy Superintendent of Police Khadka Bahadur Khatri at District Police Office Kaski, however, said that he would further investigate into the case. After two days, Police Inspector Basanta Sharma apologized for his behaviour towards the reporter in Pokhara. During a meeting held among journalists and police persons on August 8, Police Inspector apologized in front of reporter Nepali realizing his mistake. Thereafter, reporter Nepali also informed that she was ready to end the dispute thus, acknowledging the apology and further suggested to be aware not to repeat such behavior in future.

C. Publisher and executive editor with Pratikshan daily, Iqbal Ahmad, and Pramod Yadav respectively were spoken foul while asking for information on a rape case on July 24 over phone. Sunsari lies in Province No 1 of Nepal. Talking to Freedom Forum, editor Ahmad said, "From the editing desk I called Nepal Police Spokesperson at district DSP Pravin Dhital to be confirm and gather information on recent

two rape cases occurred in different places of Sunsari district on Friday and Saturday. In response, Dhital presented himself aggressively on phone, saying: "Where is your location? Why do you want to write news?" He also spoke offensive words. DSP Dhital repeated similar verbal abuse with editor Pramod Yadav, when the latter called to know about the same case later, added Ahmad. National Information Commission's Commissioner and Eastern Regional Police Chief were informed about the incident. However, responding to the media persons' complaints on difficulty in receiving information, Sunsari police is in preparation to appoint deputy spokesperson to ensure smooth flow of information.

D. Superintendent of Police Yagya Binod Pokharel manhandled Nagarik daily's reporter Madan Thakur while reporting on September 20 in Rautahat district. Quoting reporter Thakur, reporter Saha said, "While the reporter was about to take picture of the activities in the vote counting place, SP Pokharel seized his mobile warning not to take pictures. He not only spoke foul on the reporter in a huge gathering of public officials but also ordered Deputy SP to drag him out of the place."

Reporter Thakur had reached Garuda municipality's vote counting place to report on obstruction of the counting. On the third day of the local poll, some political cadres obstructed vote counting at the place demanding recounting since 4:00 in the morning. On the other hand, SP Pokharel denied misbehavior saying, reporter himself had given his mobile to keep with him. He had also called Nagarik daily's head office at Kathmandu requesting not to publish the news.

E. Freedom Forum's stringer for Province No. 2, Ajay Shah reported that Chief Election Officer Sharada Prasad Koirala manhandled and broke camera of a local correspondent with Janata television and local C FM Bidhyananda Ram while reporting in Saptari on September 24, 2017. Saptari district lies in Province No. 2.

Quoting correspondent Ram, stringer Shah said, "At 9:00 am, he reached District Election Office, Rajbiraj, to report the discussion program held among all-party representatives to resume the vote count of Rajbiraj municipality. Meanwhile, Officer Koirala seized his camera and threw it on the ground, saying journalists were not allowed to report on election-related activities, so he could not enter." Chief Election Officer Koirala however, refused to talk to journalists upon the issue, informed stringer Shah. Later, vote counting resumed from 3:00 pm but no journalists are allowed to carry their camera and mobile phones into the place for reporting.

Death Threats

A. A local Padam Bhandari issued threat of life and spoke foul words against reporters at Dadeldhura based Radio Amargadhi 97.4 MHz on August 30. Dadeldhura, a far-western district lies in Province 7 of Nepal.

Talking to Freedom Forum, News chief at Radio Amargadhi Ram Dhami said, "Immediately after news story 'Locals bound to risky travel' was published on www.radioamargadhi.org, Bhandari reached the radio's office, issued death threats and spoke foul on the reporters. He even wrote abusive words on his Facebook status addressing all the journalists in Dadeldhura district".

After Bhandari wrote foul words against journalists on his Facebook, many persons followed the suit.

Meanwhile, journalists from different media, Ram Dhami, Chhatra Saud, Maan Bahadur Saud, Baburam Shrestha, Barun Paneru, Tek Raj Awasthi, Madan Raj Bhatta, Karam Tamrakar and Pushkar Bhandari jointly filed a case against Bhandari and other locals commenting abusive under the same status under Some Public Offence and Punishment Act at District Police Office Dadeldhura on August 31.

B. A group of drunken locals threatened and attempted to attack senior journalist Sarpa Lal Giri on July 13 at 6:00 pm in Bajura. Journalist Giri is editor/ publisher of Bajura Aawaj weekly and chairperson of Bajura-based Radio Budinanda 96.5 Mhz. Bajura, a far-western district lies in Province No 7 of Nepal.

During a conversation with Freedom Forum, journalist Giri said, "It was Thursday evening, I was on the phone, a group of 8 to 10 drunken local men encircled me chanting- it's time to flog journalists, so we will finish you off today. I urged them to release me but they did not; later locals aggressively attacked upon them. Then, they ran away and I was safe."

Immediately after that, a person named Gokarna Giri shouted saying he would kill me, added Giri.

State authority's hostility towards media

A. It was quite alarming that the Election Commission (EC) directed the Press Council Nepal 'to present the chief editor of the Deshantar weekly before the EC within three days'.

Issuing a press release on July 31, the EC issued such direction, arguing that the news published recently by the weekly was false and baseless.

The circular also directed the Press Council Nepal, media content regulatory body, to take action against the Chief Editor.

Freedom Forum condemned the direction EC made as it is the blatant violation of press freedom.

Healthy criticism is imperative to check the irregularities in the State agencies. But, such hostile behavior of the constitutional body has not only panicked the entire media fraternity, but also signaled the suppressive attempt.

The weekly had published news about the gross misuse of budget by the Election Commission.

B. It was alarming that Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC), the sole body responsible for



dealing with petroleum products in Nepal, filed a case against the Nagarik daily after the daily brought into light huge financial irregularities rife in the NOC.

As the Nagarik daily states, it was sued of 'defamation case by Managing Director of NOC, Gopal Khadka, claiming Rs 800 million in damages.

The sister publication of the Nagarik daily, the Republica stated on September 1 edition as "Court officials served notice of the defamation petition filed by Khadka on August 17 at Kathmandu District Court, to Nepal Republic Media (NRM) Thursday. The petition has named NRM Managing Director Binod Raj

Gyawali, Director Shobha Gyawali, Nagarik Daily Editor-in-Chief Guna Raj Luintel and correspondent Dilip Paudel as defendants and claimed Rs 200 million from each in compensation. This is probably the biggest defamation case against any publication house in terms of the amount of compensation claimed."

Both the Nagarik and Republica dailies were making a series of investigative stories on the corruption involved in the procurement of land by NOC in various parts of the country. The dailies were publishing the stories based on the findings of the probe committees of the Legislature Parliament and the surveillance kept on by the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority, and anti-graft body.

"Khadka in his petition argued that instead of rewarding him for the good work he had tried to do, his image was tarnished by the defendants. He claimed that he was insulted by the running of stories on multi-million misappropriations involved in the procurement of land meant for building NOC storage depots," Republica made elaborate. FF took this as a sheer misuse of State authority to panic free media. 🌱

Convict of Singhaniya's murder sent to custody

District Court Dhanusha remanded Pawan Lama, another conflict on the murder of media entrepreneur Arun Singhaniya to custody for investigation on July 7. Accomplice Pawan Lama was ordered of custody in Jaleswor by a single bench of Judge Keshav Prasad Adhikari.

Other convicts Sanjay Kumar Saha, Manak Lama, Chandra Deep Yadav, and EkLalSahani have been serving their jail terms after court's order since April 2016. Singhaniya was shot dead at a local Shiva Chowk of Janakpur in March 1, 2010 over the publication of a news story on crime



Slain Media Entrepreneur
Singhaniya

in his media. He was the Chairperson of Janakpur Today Communications Group in Janakpur, a city in the southern plains of Nepal.

On March 30, the District Police Office, Dhanusha, had filed a case against 11 along with the mastermind Saha. Hence, remaining five among the convicts are yet to be booked.

FF takes it that though late the court action against the culprits is a step to help reduce impunity relating to crimes against journalists. 🌱

Impunity
watch

Less number of females in Nepali media a reflection of social construct

Freedom Forum held an interface meeting on August 22 with the objective of sharing its report relating to women's representation in Nepali print media and garnering views from the editors, journalists, rights advocates and policy makers. During the program, FF's Gender Monitoring Officer, Nanu Maiya Khadka presented an analytical report on content monitoring of nine major dailies of Nepal from January to June 2017. The report highlighted only 6% female bylines and 9.6% female sources quoted in the news contents monitored during the period. Similarly, report concluded that main news pages of national dailies contained more than 50% news related to politics and governmental issues.

Addressing the presentation, Republica daily's Associate Editor, Mr Thira Lal Bhusal, said that relatively, inclusion in media house has improved these years. Journalism as a profession is a challenging task, which obviously is an odd hour job. The social situation of the country also determines the visibility of female journalists in media house. Talking about Republica, lately, there has been increasing number of female journalists though the number is not balanced in terms of gender. "My media's reporters are free to decide their bylines based on the value of news," he stated. Obviously political news covers larger portion of newspaper, getting huge space in the first and second pages.

Moreover, he said major political decisions are taken during the night or evening time, while women reporters tend to go home before 7:00 pm, resulting in more number of males reporting political news. But it does not mean female are incapable of doing that. Generally, women journalists want to write feature news. "The Friday edition- WEEK and the GENEXT one are entirely handled by female journalists in my newspaper," he shared, suggesting FF to incorporate it in the report.

Senior Reporter of the Himalaya Times (Nepali), Ms Rama Luitel, added female sources themselves are confused about their opinions and hence, ask to cross check from other sources as well. Number of female journalists who study journalism is increasing but they do not continue to work in media houses, but begin career at I/NGO. Similarly, stringer with the National News Agency (RSS), Ms Kalpana Poudel, supported Luitel, adding that women usually did not like to explore much on political issues. That's why, the presence of women on this specific part seems weak. Reporter with The Himalayan Times daily, Ms Anita



Participants at the interface in Kathmandu.

Shrestha, said most women were fascinated towards feature based news stories. Adding suggestions to the study, Desk Editor at online news portal setopati.com, Ms Bidhya Rajput, viewed that it incorporated the overall presence of female in media. Similarly, she said women leaders quite hesitate to give information which creates doubt. So, they prefer male leaders over females, she added. Advocate Ms Poonam Kaphle suggested FF to identify and analyze the root causes behind less than 10% female bylines in news stories in Nepali print media. She wondered why women are discouraged in this sector.

As a political beat correspondent, Mr Ashok Dahal from Republica daily made it clear that female byline in media could be taken as a reflection of socio-political situation of Nepal. Sometimes, the odd hour (nature of media) is most concerned by the family of female journalists which hampers their long-term stay in media. Living in a society where females are bound to take care of their family, it is itself a major cause behind their absence in Nepali media, he added. FF's Vice-Chairperson, Mr Sahajman Shrestha, however, stated that in the recent years, Nepal civil services are likely to be dominated by female counterparts which could be taken as a positive aspect.

Concerning about the theoretical angle of the study, Associate Professor at KU, Dr Sudhamshu Dahal, urged FF to pay attention on deep rooted patriarchy and red-tape patriarchy. He also advised to improve the graphical presentation to make the study more impactful. He then suggested checking how the patriarchy is determining the less number of females in media and 'who' and 'what' defines the working hours in media. Information Officer at Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Mr Dorendra Niraula, suggested FF that it incorporated whether the women were included in management of media houses. For

an example, he said that in this program, 2-3 women left program because they failed to manage time, that is to say, they were in need to go to office to ensure their early return to home- before evening. "Only female of 'voice' and 'choice' are highlighted more than other key points," he observed.

While, advocate Ms Sushma Thapa said although there was a large number of aspiring female journalism students, they were less interested to practice journalism. Why? She wondered, adding that at the same time, why media houses did not provide special incentive to women to retain them in media because they face biological constraints.

Editor of the Himalayan Times (Nepali), Govinda Luitel, said, "We need news- not how balanced the news sources are. Working as a journalist is quite challenging job indeed." Again, reminding a past experience he quoted one of the female reporters as saying, "No, I don't stay long to read news at 9:30 pm because my mother doesn't allow me". It is a family problem which is constructed by our patriarchy; a major reason behind women's participation in the mainstream media.

He further said every media has its policy on byline. "If there are males in the post of Spokesperson, how can media quote female," he questioned. FF's Chairperson Hari Binod Adhikari and Media Monitoring Officer Narayan Ghimire appreciated participants' recommendations to the study.

Chairperson Adhikari mentioned that the study report was an advocacy tool to increasing women's space in Nepali media. The program was attended by 26 individuals from media houses, Ministry of Women, Children and Social welfare, National Women Commission, advocates and media experts. 🌱

Voices for National Broadcasting Authority

Freedom Forum organized a round table discussion among the stakeholders concerned on 'National Broadcasting Sector and Establishment of National Broadcasting Authority' in Kathmandu on August 6, 2017.

The program was organized with an objective to bring forth the voices on the relevance of National Broadcasting Authority in Nepal, which was the issue unheard for long.

Initiating the program, FF's Executive Chief Mr Taranath Dahal argued that it had been too late to debate seriously on the broadcasting sector. So, the views on it would be fruitful to enter a common understanding in the changed context of federal set up, he hoped.

During the program, Janata TV's General Manager Mr Laxman Humagain presented a paper on Relevance of Broadcast Regulator in the changed context. In his presentation he shed light upon role of Ministry of Information and Communications, regulation and monitoring of broadcast sector and several policies (Advertising, clean feed, frequency) needed to make this sector systematic.

According to him, numerous issues as production, advertisement, radio network are waiting proper attention to make Nepal's broadcasting system robust. He said, "Whether it is distribution of radio frequency or classification of broadcasters, the government must act fairly", adding further it was quite worrying a person from remote Karnali needs to table the file before a Minister in Singha Durbar, Kathmandu, to get permission for an FM Radio.

“It had been too late to debate seriously on the broadcasting sector. So, the views on it would be fruitful to enter a common understanding in the changed context of federal set up.”



Participants at the program in Kathmandu on 6 August 2017

Similarly, sharing various 'failed efforts' on establishment of national broadcasting authority, broadcasting media expert Mr Tapanath Shukla observed, "Political lobbying is most important to ensure establishment of the national broadcasting authority in Nepal." He reminded that the officials at the Ministry of Information and Communications used to think that if the authority was set up, it could be a 'white elephant' and thus, they are not ready to delegate their power.

Media researcher Mr Devraj Humagain expressed worry that civic space was shrinking in Nepal. "How ridiculous it is when one needs to get permission from the Social Welfare Council for conducting media research," he wondered, accusing the government of creating various authorities and institutes just to install employees rather than working for substantial change.

Similarly, senior radio broadcaster Mr Krishna KC shared the experience that it was quite difficult to persuade political parties and leaders on the need of public service broadcasting in Nepal.

Another broadcaster Mr Suman Basnet said the National Mass Media Policy was faulty, so it needs immediate correction. He stressed upon continuous discussion on digitization also through listeners' prospect among stakeholders.

“Providing license to FM radio haphazardly would invite host of problems. Distribution of frequency must not be an unfair business.”

ACORAB Chairman Mr Subash Khatiwada said providing license to FM radio haphazardly would invite host of problems. Distribution of frequency must not be an unfair business, he stressed.

Advocate Mr Ramkrishna Nirala said as long as the same person continues to be owner and worker (journalist/editor) at a media, advocacy efforts would not be meaningful.

Another advocate Mr Baburam Aryal argued that internet should be left to its own spirit and sphere, as it has different ecosystem. Internet could not be compared with radio and television.

“Advocacy could be made for national communications authority rather than national broadcasting authority to incorporate all communications issues. Besides, appointment and selection process has to be under public and parliamentary vigilance.”

Deputy GM at Radio Nepal, Mr Ashok Banskota, said digitization should be augmented to wipe out current problems in broadcasting sector.

Similarly, ACORAB's Executive Director Dr. Ram Chandra Lamichhane stated that extensive reconstruction is essential in the broadcasting sector through socialistic aspect. Existing system is contradictory, undemocratic and unconstitutional, he argued.

FF's General Secretary Mr Dharmendra Jha suggested the stakeholders to discuss upon bringing a new bill on non-government organizations.

FNJ Chairman Dr Mahendra Bista however suggested that advocacy could be made for national communications authority rather than national broadcasting authority to incorporate all communications issues. Besides, appointment and selection process has to be under public and parliamentary vigilance.

Nepal Bar Association's Chairperson Mr Sher Bahadur KC said democracy could not be functional as long as the media was controlled and guided. Free media and free society under constitutional compliance is a need, he stated.

Addressing the above mentioned issues, Department of Information's Director General



Participants at the program

Mr Bir Bahadur Rai said, “Firstly, gaps in the policy formulation and implementation must be analysed well.” He also assured that he would share the concerns of stakeholders in the department and Ministry as well.

Chairman of Press Council Nepal Mr Bhawani Prasad Baral suggested to make an umbrella act which may regulate other acts. He admitted that Press Council's role is limited to print media, so it was in need of legal reform to monitor broader issues including that of broadcasting and news portals.

“Democracy could not be functional as long as the media was controlled and guided. Free media and free society under constitutional compliance is a need.”

Facilitating the discussion, FF Executive Chief added that the discussion was contextual as NBA and PSB were only the topic of discussion for two decades. A regulation on contents, human resource, licensing and business/ tax was necessary. Media can be of any type but new technology should be friendly to the new act, and should be regulated accordingly. Also, broadcast sector needs license because it uses public frequency, he opined.

Other speakers at the program complained that the broadcasting sector in Nepal was ignored and belittled mostly by the government and the bureaucracy. Despite several efforts made to set up the national broadcasting authority to see overall issues facing broadcasting sector, the lack of political commitment and bureaucratic non-cooperation and indifference were major hurdles to this end, argued most of the speakers.

Lastly, pointing out the need for establishment of NBA and its continuous discussion at national level FF's Chairman Hari Binod Adhikari concluded the program.

The program was attended by 46 participants from different governmental and non-governmental broadcasters, media educators, advocates, researchers, media persons and broadcast experts. 🌱

Improve democratic practice

Int'l Democracy Day

Freedom Forum organized a dialogue on 'Challenges of Democracy in Nepal' on 15 September marking the International Democracy Day in Kathmandu.

The program was aimed at seeking views on the challenges to what debate on democracy in Nepal. On the occasion, FF Executive Chief Mr Taranath Dahal said this day-International Democracy Day- should be celebrated as an important occasion in Nepal.

"Fundamental aspect of democracy needs to be addressed time and again," he said, adding that democracy could be achieved by continuous reforms and practice.

As the keynote speakers Mr Shreekrishna Anirudra Gautam and political scientist Dr. Chandra Dev Bhatta presented their views on Challenges of Democracy and the measures to strengthen the practice of democracy in Nepal.

Mr Gautam stated there was no concrete structure of democracy but it must be realized in practice. He focused on the formal institutional structure of democracy where election could be one of the most significant aspects. Other imperative aspects are people's representation, distribution of resources in the society, justice delivery system, among others.

"Formal democracy depends on the action and motive of actors. Democracy is regulated by the actors. If the character of the actors is positive and service oriented then democracy can prosper in a greater extent but if the character of the actors is negative then it gives rise to outrage and corruption in the society," he underscored.



According to him, democracy can only be strengthened when all actors are obedient towards their duty and work for the growth of every aspect of the country's resources.

Discussing the philosophical aspect of the democracy, another keynote speaker Dr Bhatta shared his remarks on gradual development of democracy in the world scenario. "Nepal needs to observe its own way of regulation for the practice of substantive democracy. Mere election is not sufficient to ensure substantive democracy in Nepal. However, election helps guarantee periodic stability."

The political scientist suggested that Nepal could emphasize economy to boost democracy. Any of the movements waged across the globe since 1955 has been waged in the name of democracy.

On the occasion, Central Committee Member of Bibeksheel Sajha Party, Prakash Chandra Pariyar, expressed his view that there was the need of mass-based political party in Nepal to change the situation of political downfall, which would ultimately strengthen the democracy.

Showing concern for future, advocate and FF's Executive Member Ms Rammaya Lamichanne said we- Nepalis- can ponder how democracy has been practiced in our country. The political players are themselves accountable for the political developments-be it good or bad-in relation to democracy.

Senior investigative journalist Mr Hasta Guring said he was very thankful to the keynote speakers for elucidating on various aspects of democratic principles and practices in relation to Nepal's development.

Nepali Congress activist Mr Lokesh Dhakal said Nepal's democracy must improve to deliver the people. Traditional form and talks of democracy cannot suit the modern aspiration, he said, worrying about eroding democratic values in Nepal.

Concluding the program, FF Chairperson Hari Binod Adhikari also appreciated the lectures and pointed out the change in the behavior of democratic actors to bring change in the country. The program was attended by 37 participants representing various sectors as media, academic, politics, and law, among others. 🌱

Executive Member Pokhrel Welcomed

Freedom Forum has extended hearty congratulations to its Executive Board Member Mr Bipul Pokhrel for his election to the post of Vice-Chairman of the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ). Organizing a program at the FF Office in Kathmandu on August 29, the FF team welcomed Mr Pokhrel and extended him

best wishes for successful tenure. Mr Pokhrel, committed to journalism untiringly for nearly three decades, is expected to protect and promote press freedom and journalists' safety across the country. FF also expressed willingness to cooperate with FNJ in the area of freedom of expression and journalists' safety. 🌱



Protect Freedom of Expression in National Policies

Comments on draft bill of Criminal Code from FoE lenses

Freedom Forum has commented on the draft bill of the Criminal Code from the angle of freedom of expression, and disseminated a report on it to almost 100 parliamentarians of the Development Committee under the Legislature Parliament.

The report is prepared being based on prudence of the proposed criminal code with its affiliation to international standards and national legislation. The provisions in the proposed bill which seem to give ground for vague interpretation, inconsistency with the international and constitutional standards need to be amended. Taking it into account, the report is disseminated to lawmakers.

On 2 November 2014, Nepal's Ministry of Law, Justice, Constituent Assembly and Parliamentary Affairs had tabled five bills, including the bill on the Criminal Code at the Legislative-Parliament.

Policy Watch

The Government of Nepal's latest initiative to update its criminal laws and codify new crimes signals renewed political will to address this problem and is an improvement on previous draft bills. However, the current draft still falls short of meeting Nepal's international human rights obligation to criminalize human rights violations and abuses that amount to crimes under international law.

Lawmakers made aware of media directive

Freedom Forum held a brief meeting with parliamentarians on August 9 and made them aware about the Online Media Operation and Management Directive. The meeting held at the Office of Legislature Parliament was aimed at sensitizing the lawmakers about the possible misuse of the Directive thereby violating the international standards and national legislation on the freedom of expression. The concern was shown before the lawmakers of the Communications Subcommittee

under the Legislation Committee of the Parliament that some sections in the Directive could breach the FoE practice on internet at a time when the internet has been widely used medium for the FoE practice in Nepal as well. In view of the spurt of the internet-based news portals with the expansion of the related technical infrastructures, the expression on the internet is obviously thriving. But, the Directive was brought from out of jurisdiction of parent law. It was brought under the Good Governance (Management and Operation) Act, which is faulty.

To this regard, the coordinator of the Subcommittee lawmaker Mr Radhe Shyam Adhikari also said the basis of the introduction of Directive seemed faulty. He, however, said the Subcommittee would take initiative on this issue to the concerned department and Ministry to check its validity. Mr Adhikari also suggested FF finding out the international practice on operation and regulation of online media.

Apart from Adhikari, lawmaker Teka Nepali and L.B. Rawal said it was positive initiative from the civil society to show concern on the ongoing legislation and policy formulation.

FF submitted the analytical report it made on the Directive to the Subcommittee and several stakeholders. 🌱

Nepal Army's plan to operate FM radio violates democratic values

Freedom Forum was alarmed over Nepal Army's preparation to run FM radio. The plan of the Nepal Army (NA), the ultimate security body of the State, to run FM radio is a wrong concept, for it is a sheer breach of people's rights. FM frequency is purely a public property.

At a time when the concept of Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) was broached in Nepal since the past one decade, and discussion

and debates whetted to transform the State-run Radio Nepal and Nepal Television to the PSB model, the NA's plan to operate the FM radio is a mistaken concept which violates the democratic principles and values. Only PSB can ensure people's access to media, and creates foundation to ensure other rights to the people. The news has come that NA began test transmission of FM radio in Dipayal, the far-west city of Nepal, in July. In the changed constitutional and governance

set up, the importance of PSB is ever growing. Running media by NA is not only ridiculous but also condemnable, because it, instead of ensuring right to people, tends to violate their rights, keeping in center the interest of the security agency. There is high chance that the radio getting misused and controlled as the security agency turns aggressive and suppressive, observes the FF. In a democracy, the State should not run media in deed. 🌱

NPC, Info Ministry prodded on SDG 16.10

Freedom Forum has drawn the attention of the National Planning Commission (NPC), the sole body to formulate periodic plans in Nepal, and the Ministry of Information and Communications, about the Sustainable Development Goal No. 16.10, and the gaps in the Voluntary National Report and the Baseline Report NPC prepared on behalf of Nepal Government.

Writing a letter to NPC Member (Now Vice-Chair) Dr Swarnim Wagle, and the Ministry, FF made them aware that FF as a civil society organization committed to achieving SDGs by organizing various campaigns was ready to co-operate with them to realize the country's plans pertaining to SDG 16.10. The SDG 16.10 mentions: Ensure Public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

It further makes elaborate: Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journal-

ists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months (16.10.1), Freedom score (Combined with freedom of speech, freedom of assemblies and association, electoral self-determination (16.10.2), Access to information (%) (16.10.3).

Through the letter, FF has shown its concern regarding the Voluntary National Report (for implementation) and Baseline Report NPC prepared on behalf of Nepal Government that both the documents had not mentioned any indicators nor had further information to prioritize and achieve the target 16.10.

There is no information about the present status, progress, and the national indicators set to achieve the goal, said the letter, pointing out an urgent need to prioritize target 16.10 and set development indicators as per Nepali context.

FF also emphasized the cooperation and coordination among the stakeholders to work together to this end.

"We would like to call for the attention of Nepal Government, Government bodies, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to work together to give a complete shape to the Baseline Report and set indicators for the achievement of the goals," the letter underscored.

Nepal, as the UN member, had participated in the UN General Assembly in September 2015 which passed the resolution of SDG 17 goals and 169 targets along with other member countries of UN.

The SDG has already been applicable since the beginning of 2016. This has incorporated economic and technical aspects of governance and development along with the political and social aspects and has also defined government as well as private sector, civil society organization and institutions' concerted efforts to achieve the pre-determined goal of governance and development. 🌱

Press Freedom Voilation Factsheet

S.N	Date	Place/ Province	Incident	No. of Journalists affected		Journalists/ Media house directly Affected	Remarks
				Directly	Indirectly		
1	30-Jun	Kathmandu (3)	Senior reporters barred entrance by organizers	4	—	Reporters and camera persons from Janata Television	Pre-planned denial for reporting
2	1-Jul	Nawalparasi (3)	Reporters denied entry into vote counting by election officers	10	—	Gorkhapatra, Daunne FM, Butwal Today, Suanaul FM, Triveni Tv, Vijay FM and other local media	Reporters had to rely upon 4-5 hours late updates
3	13-Jul	Bajura (7)	Reporter attacked by unknown gang	1	—	Image Television Bajura's reporter	Received injuries on head and body
4	13-Jul	Bajura (7)	Attack attempt to media person attempted to by local cadres	1	12	Editor/ Publisher of Bajura weekly & Chairperson of Radio Budhinanda 96.5 Mhz	Radio station's program halted since 14th July
5	14-Jul	Bajura (7)	Media house attacked by drunk locals	10	—	Radio Budinanda 96.5 Mhz	Station closed for 1 month.
6	19-Jul	Sindhupalchowk (3)	Reporter manhandled by local leader	1	56	Kantipur Daily	Spoke foul on reporter of his profession
7	24-Jul	Sunsari (1)	Police spokesperson misbehaved with reporters	2	9	Pratishkhan daily's reporters Iqbal Ahmad and Pramod Yadav	Police spoke foul on reporters
8	25-Jul	Kathmandu (3)	Reporters barred entry into publication for reporting	2	—	Bishnu Aryal (Republica) & Basanta Khadka (Nagarik daily)	They couldnot carryout followup reporting.
9	26-Jul	Kathmandu (3)	Private media barred entry into President's office for reporting	5	—	Nepal TV (2), National News Agency (1), Gorkhapatra (1) and Radio Nepal	Reporters could not report on oath taking ceremony of ministers.
10	4-Aug	Kathmandu (3)	NOC's ED issued threat of attack to reporter	1	—	Dilip Poudel (Nagarik)	Threatening to his family and career too.
11	5-Aug	Kaski (4)	Female reporter manhandled by Police	1	—	Aastha Nepali (sancharkendra online news portal)	Grabbed camera forcefully, later apologized
12	5-Aug	Kathmandu (3)	Police persons enquiry inside media house	2	9	www.newsabhiyan.com	Police searched for source and proof for news
13	17-Aug	Kathmandu (3)	NOC filed defamation case against Nagarik over news published	4	—	Nepal Republic Media	Case was filed seeking Rs. 800 million as compensation for defamation of MD
14	30-Aug	Dadeldhura (7)	A Local abused reporters over news in facebook	9	76	Radio Amargadhi 97.4 MHz	Media persons have filed lawsuit at DPO under Public Offence Act
15	11-Sep	Kathmandu (3)	Locals issued threat of attack to reporters	2	114	Umesh Poudel and Janardan Baral (Nayapatrika)	They also filed case against reporters at political party's office
16	18-Sep	Bara (2)	Reporter barred entry into vote counting centers	1	5	Krishna Sigde (www.onlinekhabar.com)	Reporters could not update on vote counting results
17	19-Sep	Rautahat (2)	Election officer seized camera while reporting on counting of votes	1	1	Rakesh Yadav (Mountain Television)	Election officer forcefully grabbed the camera
18	20-Sep	Rautahat (2)	High level Police official manhandles reporter while reporting	1	—	Madan Thakur (Nagarik daily)	
19	20-Sep	Kathmandu (3)	Woman journalist attacked in Kathmandu	1	1	Bhavna Prasai 'Bidrohi' (Naya Bidroha weekly)	She got minor injuries on head, neck and face.
20	24-Sep	Saptari (2)	Chief Election Officer manhandled TV reporter; broke his camera	1	1	Bidhyananda Ram (local correspondent with Janata television and local C FM)	Chief Election Officer Sharada Prasad Koirala manhandled and broke camera while reporting

753 local levels prodded for disclosure of information

Coinciding with the National Information Rights Day, Freedom Forum – which has been campaigning for protection and promotion of freedom of expression and information – requested from information from all 753 local units. Seeking information from the public agencies is a step to see how transparent the activities and decisions are there.

FF's Executive Chief, Taranath Dahal, Chairperson Hari Binod Adhikari, General Secretary Dharmendra Jha, advocate and FF's Secretary Ms Ram Maya Lamichane, social worker and FF's Treasurer, Kedar Dahal, FF's Plan and Policy advisor Krishna Sapkota, and RTI campaigner Kumar Chaulagain requested for the information through the post office. The information was sought as per Article 27 of the Nepal's Constitution 2015, and Section 3 and Section 7 (1) of Right to Information Act, 2064.

The information has been sought, according to Dahal, to facilitate the transparency and accountability of the local government. General Secretary Jha said the information was sought with the executive council offices of the local levels across the country with the hope of creating an environment of trust with the local government and to seek constructive participation of the civilians.

Following information was sought from the local levels:

- a. Appointment of Information Officer: name, email, room number, position, and communication mechanism, if any;
- b. Any information officers appointed in the wards under this office. If yes, information about it,
- c. Any information department in place in this office? If yes, how many staffs are working there and what is the location of the department?
- d. Mechanism for proactive disclosure of 20 different information as per RTI Act, a copy of disclosed information and their mechanism,
- e. Details of public hearing for this fiscal year under Good Governance Act; in case of third party involvement, a certified copy of

contract/ agreement paper,

- f. If there are any plans, policies or laws regarding information management, if yes, a copy of it,
- g. If there is any citizen charter at the office; if yes, where they are placed. Whether citizen charter is published in any newsletters/ news bulletin; if yes, copy of the bulletin.

- h. If there is any website; if yes, information about the portal and name of the responsible person to update the website.

- i. Whether the elected local representatives have provided their property details; if yes, where and how secure are the document recorded; if the information is public, a copy of it.

- j. The budget allocated for the advertisement of construction, import and services for this fiscal year; how it is done; whether the advertisement is produced in digital format; if yes, a link and information of the websites,

- k. If there is any provision of placing the hoarding boards on the project sites; if yes, how many hoarding boards would be placed and where.

- l. The link of the website where there are details about the budget allocated for this fiscal year,

- m. If there is any legal policy that assures public participations in the works of this agency; if yes, a copy of the document,

- n. Whether the office has published service delivery booklet; if yes, a copy of it,

- o. Where there is any guideline, policy regarding the collaboration with various civil society organizations; if yes, a copy of documents,

- p. Whether the office has the digital format of the data received while working; whether the data is available on the open data format

- q. Whether there is any project bank; if yes, information about the recording of the details,

- r. About the staffs (name list, responsibilities, ToR and approved staff list)

The applications seeking the above information were also brought to the awareness of the National Information Commission (NIC).

Till the last week of September, 31 local levels among 753 provided the requested information. Seven, thirteen, two, seven and one institutions from Provinces No 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7 respectively have provided information as per demanded, whereas the local level from Province No 2 and No 6 have not responded yet.

Hence, RTI desk is in preparation to file applications to Office Chief at the respective local levels which failed to respond the first application. 🌱

Information Officers appointed in Colleges

After RTI application filed at 60 TU affiliated colleges all over Nepal, they have appointed information officers. Previously reluctant to provide information and appoint information officer, affiliated colleges have now appointed information officers and they provide information to demand side and NIC through those officers appointed.

Among the colleges, 40 colleges including Bhojpur Multiple Campus, Mahendra Multiple Campus Banke, Doti Multiple Campus Doti, Mahendra Ratna Multiple Campus Ilam, Dadheldhura Multiple Campus, Amargadhi Campur Dadheldhura, Institute of Forestry Pokhara, Jumla Multiple Campus, Mechi Multiple Campus, Mahendra Ratna Campus Tahachal, Central college of technology Dharan, Thakur Ram Multiple Campus Birgunj Parsa, Thapathali Campus, Terhathum Multiple Campus, Ram Swarup Ram Sagar Multiple Campus Janakpur, Nepalgunj Nursing Campus have appointed information officers.

Remaining colleges have informed demand side that they will also appoint information officers very soon. Later after FF realized the fact that central staffs deputed to internal audit of affiliated colleges have received two-way benefit from central office as well as concerned colleges. Then, FF again demanded information from the respective institutions on those details. 🌱



Huge Gender Gap *in* News Source of Nepali Broadsheet

Freedom Forum presents yet another report on study of representation of women in the Nepali media contents for the months of July to September 2017. News media are still important sources of information to the general public. While advocacy on gender equality is on rise, FF believes media contents should also be inclusive in terms of gender to ensure equal voices and inclusive participation.

Against this backdrop, FF started monitoring media contents to collect evidence and quantitative results on women's participation and provide relevant recommendation so as to contribute towards inclusive Nepali media.

The activity is carried out with the financial support of the Free Press Unlimited (FPU), a foundation based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, working in freedom of expression issues across the world; produces evidence based report which is prepared following the

tools and methodologies as provided by FPU. For this, FF monitored major nine national dailies, thereby drawing data on percentage of males and females in bylines and news sources.

The objective of the study is to draw extract data as number of male/ females bylines and number of male/ female news source in the news contents of main news pages; to conduct a comparative analysis on percentage representations of males and females in Nepali media contents.

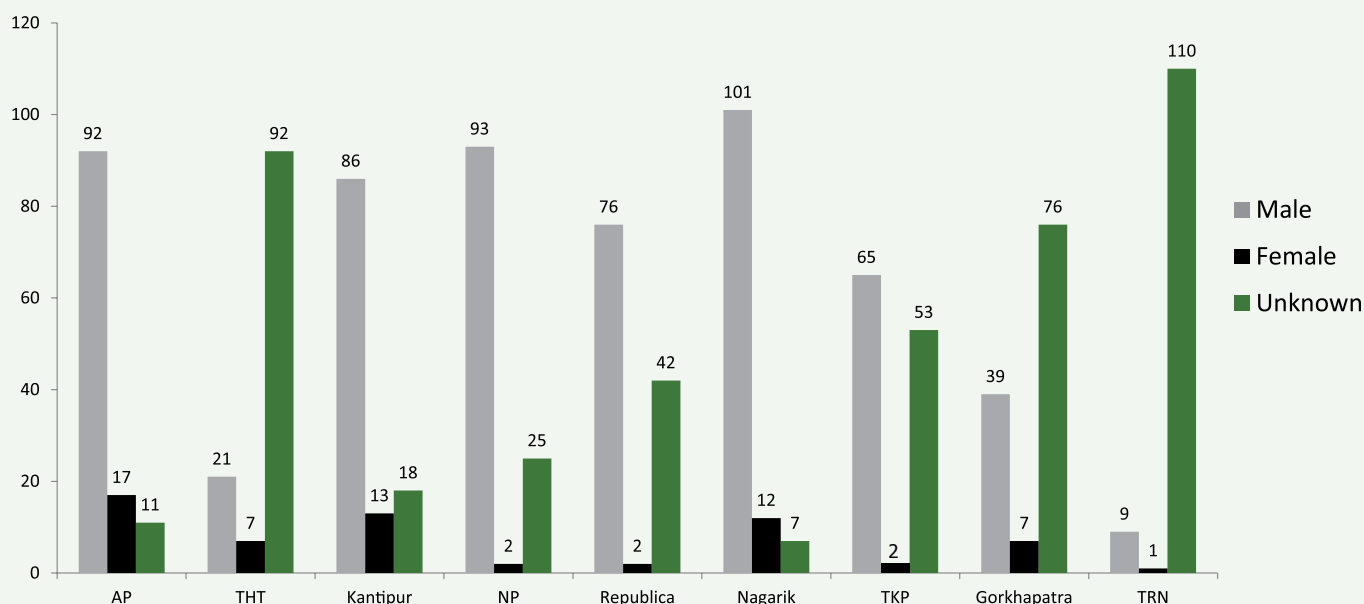
The study, however, does not cover all sections such as op-eds, entertainment, economics, technology, etc. of the chosen national dailies. It only picks eight main news stories from each newspaper once in a week as representative samples.

As done in the previous study and analyses, the contents are picked from the same nine national dailies: Kantipur, Nagarik, Annapurna Post, Gorkhapatra and Naya Patrika in Nepali language and The Kathmandu Post, The Rising

Glimpses from the previous report (April-June 2017):

- Male bylines (53%) outnumbered female (6%), while unknown 41%.
- Annapurna Post scored the highest (99) male bylines whereas, Kantipur contained the highest 15 bylines amongst others.
- 80% news contents contained men, 9% women and 11% secondary sources.
- Kantipur contributed to both the maximum female byline reporters (23%) and sources (16%)
- 60% news fall under Politics and Government followed by 20% Social and legal news
- 51% females reported on Politics and Government issues whereas, 25% reported on social and legal issues on the main news pages.
- Among total, 7.12% news stories warranted further analysis.

JOURNALISTS (WHO ARE TALKING IN THE MEDIA)



Nepal, The Himalayan Times, and Republica in English language. Those outlets were selected on the basis of their wide circulation, strong public reach and content diversity.

Key Points:

- Male bylines (53.94%) outnumbered female (5.84%), while unknown (40.22%)
- Nagarik scored the highest (101) male bylines among others whereas; Annapurna Post contained 17 female bylines (highest of all).
- Among total 1,076 news monitored, 79.75% contained men, 10.38% women and 9.88% secondary sources.
- Among total females, Annapurna Post and Kantipur contributed to the maximum reporters (26.98%) and quoted sources (20.08%) respectively.
- 53.06% news titles fall under Politics and Government followed by 27.32% social and legal news.
- 42.85% females reported on politics and government issues whereas, only 27% of females reported on social and legal issues on the main news pages.
- Among total, 11.25% news stories warranted further analysis thus, challenging stereotype and highlighting (in) equality.

Results:

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

During the study period, neither of the dailies showed zero bylines but some of the dailies' news contents failed to show increase in the female bylines.

Among the media outlets monitored, this time too, The Rising Nepal contributed to those with the least known bylines followed by The Himalayan Times and Gorkhapatra.

Among the total 1,079 bylines monitored, Nagarik constituted maximum (101) male bylines whereas, Annapurna Post contributed to maximum (17) female bylines. Similarly, TRN contains maximum unknown bylines (110).

Those news stories unknown bylines contained Himalayan News Service, Rastriya Samachar Samiti (RSS), Kantipur Reporter, Naya Patrika, Nagarik Reporter, Staff Reporter, Post Report, Gorkhapatra Reporter, etc. in the bylines.

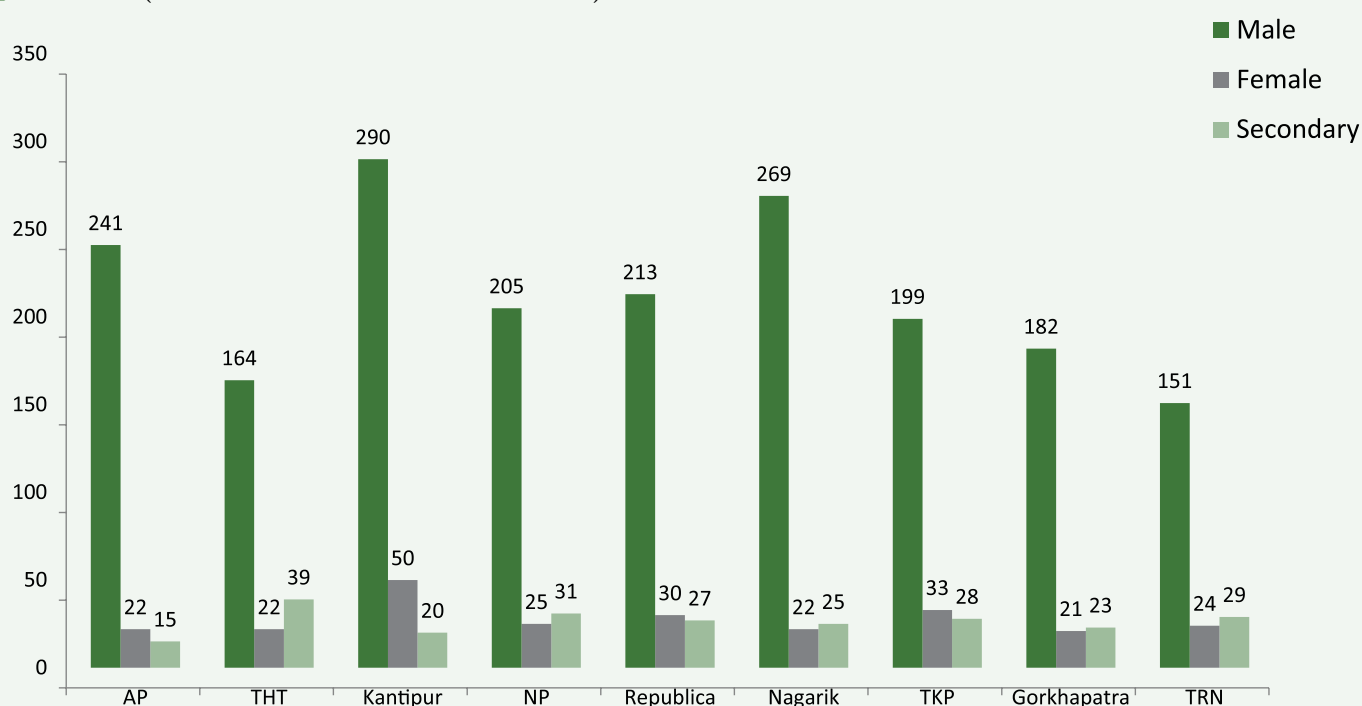
Interestingly, data of female bylines in Kantipur and Annapurna Post have been found to be competitively exceeding one after another in different reports. However, this report presents highest female bylines from Annapurna Post

Those news stories with unknown bylines contained Himalayan News Service, Rastriya Samachar Samiti (RSS), Kantipur Reporter, Naya Patrika, Nagarik Reporter, Staff Reporter, Post Report, Gorkhapatra Reporter, etc. in the bylines.

followed by Kantipur. Again, one of the major highlight of the study is that THT which was known to have zero female bylines on the first report now contains 7 female bylines. Even though overall data shows clear disparity; in Nepal's context, these can be taken as satisfactory results because individual media depicts increasing trend towards gender equality.

Amongst all, male bylines outnumbered female (5.84%) and unknown (40.22%) by 53.94%.

SOURCES (WHO ARE TALKING IN THE STORIES)



Reality check

FF also studied actual number of male and female reporters associated with monitored print media so as to draw comparative data. Actual data revealed maximum number of female reporters associated with Republica. On further query, Associate Editor at Republica informed that Republica's supplement issues as My City, Friday, etc are solely driven by female reporters but those reporting for the main news pages are still less and turnover rate is high.

The comparative data of male/female reporters was provided by the respective media houses. Again, data reveal 53% of the total news contents monitored come from politics and government hence, number of bylines depend upon number of political beat reporting male and female journalists.

To this context, female reporters included in the study say most of the political meetings, negotiations and discussions take place in the evening/night which is the major restraint for them as in case of Nepali society. Also, the reporting environment is not much favorable to women, one of the male reporters informed.

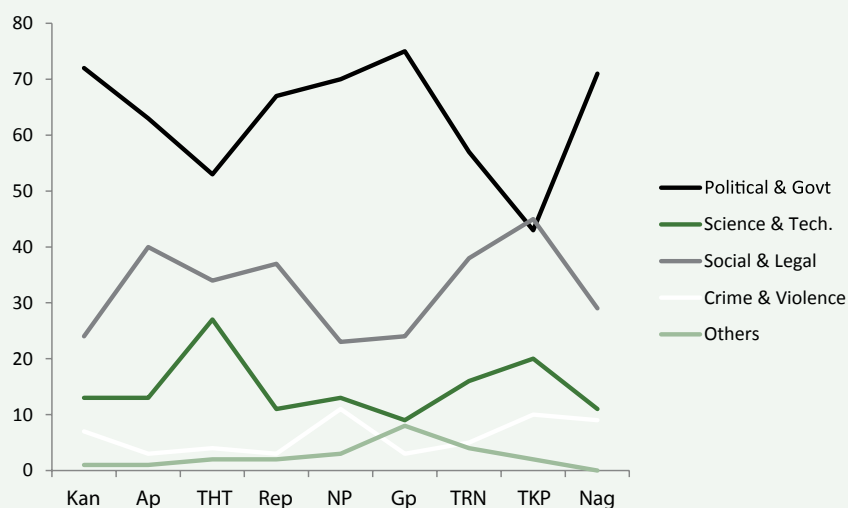
Similarly, realization at recruitment level is also minimal according to an editor of Naya Patrika. He further said, "Only after discussing with FF on the reports we realized women's presence in our media. Now, we are keen on increasing female workspace in our house and the most credit goes to you."

2. Sources (Who are talking in the stories)

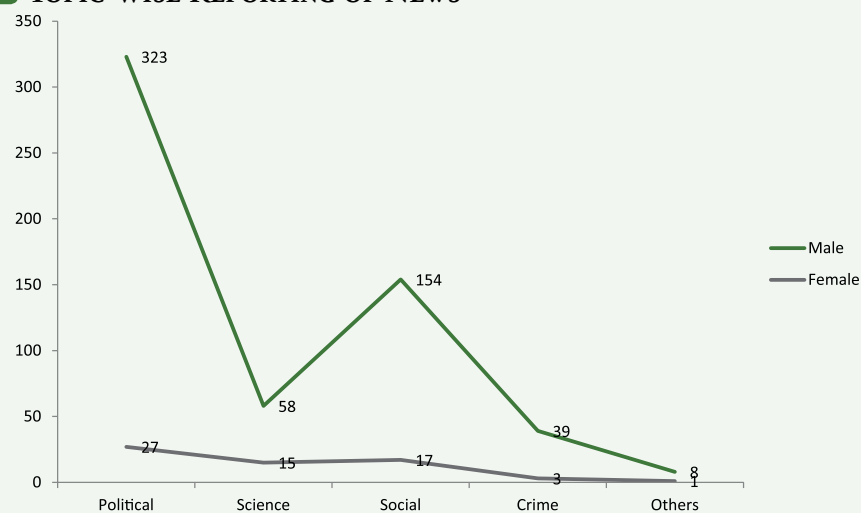
According to data, main news of the Nepali media outlets still prefer male news sources

“Only after discussing with FF on the reports we realized women's presence in our media. Now, we are keen on increasing female workspace in our house and the most credit goes to you.”

TOPIC-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF NEWS



TOPIC-WISE REPORTING OF NEWS



to their female counter part resulting 79.75% male sources in contrast to 10.38% and 9.88% female and secondary sources respectively.

Among total 2,400 sources quoted in the news monitored, Kantipur daily's news contents contained maximum male (290) and female (50) sources whereas, THT quoted maximum secondary sources (39). As compared to the last report, total number of women as news sources show increasing trend. Secondary sources refer to data, reports, proposals, statements, amendment bills, court bills, orders, press releases, manifesto, etc.

Though overall data on women sources is considerably low; comparing to the previous reports it is progressive.

Increase in the participation of women in the news stories can be linked to the recently elected female representatives at local levels of Nepal.

Reality Check

Recently held report dissemination and Interface meeting yielded various voices from concerned stakeholders. One of the female reporters described, "Main factor is again maximum political news on the contents monitored

“

Sometimes, female sources themselves are confused about the news and thus, refer us to their male counterparts. Thus, even if we try to incorporate female voices, reliable voice is still lacking.”

”

where, most of the spokesperson of political parties and ministries (including ministry of women) are male.”

Another reporter reiterated, “Sometimes, female sources themselves are confused about the news and thus, refer us to their male counterparts. Thus, even if we try to incorporate female voices, reliable voice is still lacking.”

3. Topic-wise distribution of News stories

After coding the title of the selected news stories as per provided by FPU, those were assembled so as to differentiate their category. After tabulation, study team discovered 53% of 1077 news titles fall under politics and government category. Among remaining categories, social and legal contained 27% followed by science and technology 12%, crime and violence 6% and celebrity, arts, media and sports only 1%.

Gorkhapatra contained the highest value of news under politics and government followed by Kantipur, Nagarik and Naya Patrika whereas, TKP contained least of all. Similarly, THT contained maximum news on science and technology while, TKP covered social and legal news the most.

“

Main factor is again maximum political news on the contents monitored where, most of the spokesperson of political parties and ministries (including ministry of women) are male.”

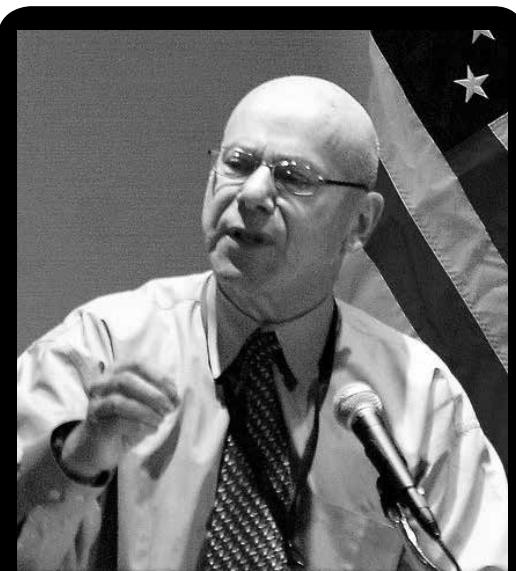
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Upon the analysis on gender divide on the basis of topic of news stories, 323 males and 27 females reported on politics and government whereas, only 154 males and 17 females reported on Social and legal issues following others. The data clearly explains election fever and political turmoil of the country during the study period.

Conclusion

The three monthly studies of the contents revealed gradual improvement on representation of women in Nepali media contents. However, over all data on women's presence in byline is similar as previous. Women journalists and sources comprise 5.84% and 10.38% respectively. During this quarter, the Annapurna Post had the highest number of female bylines, whereas the Nagarik daily constituted the highest number of male bylines. Overall, news on politics and government was found dominant. Compared to the previous reports, percentage of women as news sources has increased by 1.38%. News contents from Kantipur contained highest number of both male and female sources quoted, while the THT contained maximum number of secondary sources among others. Almost 43% female journalists reported on political and governmental issues, whereas only 27% reported on social and legal issues. Conclusively, in comparison to the previous report, the increase of female news sources is a positive improvement. Moreover, one of the major highlight of the study is that THT which was known to have zero female bylines on the first report now contains 7 female bylines.

Proper security and retaining plans should be brought up for the female media persons to ensure their dedication and enthusiasm to work even at odd hours. Fair competition among coworkers and gender friendly work place is the utmost requirement to retain and increase working women journalists. 🌱



Obituary

Freedom Forum is saddened to know the passing away of Mr. Arnold Amber, a lifelong freedom of expression and press freedom advocate. His death spread a global shock on the FoE fraternity. It is the irreparable loss in deed.

He died on September 4, 2017 at the age of 77. As the President of Canadian Journalist of Free Expression, a founding member of IFEX network and as an IFEX council member for more than two decades, Arnold lived his commitment of ideal of an international network of freedom of expression activist and supported it with guidance and leadership.

A devoted family man Mr. Amber had a close relationship with his three children and four grandchildren. He was born in Montreal Canada on October 29, 1939 to Joseph and Bella Amber, mentioned the IFEX.

Congratulates

Freedom Forum congratulates and welcomes the new staff member appointed under various projects. *Mr. Bishal Dahal* has been appointed as Governance Officer under the Project ‘Sustainable use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal (SUSASAN)’ funded by CECI. *Mr. Sabin Rimal* has been appointed as Monitoring and Evaluation Officer under the project ‘Support to Enable Environment for Free, Accountable and Sustainable Media in Nepal (SEFAS)’ funded by Free Press Unlimited. 🌱

Cleaning up government

Alaina B Teplitz, US ambassador to Nepal

Ask yourself: Can I receive government services without paying a bribe? Do I need to have a close connection to a political party or “big man” to get a timely approval for a standard business practice? Can I even get a job or send my child to school without paying into some network or cartel? Will newly elected local officials really deliver on promises of development and services or simply seek to repay the party’s *aphno maanchhe* (“Own Guy”)?

Every day I read stories in the Nepali press about the latest corruption scandal. It is encouraging to see the media focusing increased attention on corruption and parliamentary committees conducting more investigations into questionable practices and transactions. While we must certainly retain the presumption of innocence and await the findings of credible investigations before casting aspersions of guilt, it is staggering to me how the average Nepali’s response to these allegations is one of a lamenting shrug and assertion that “that’s just how things are done in Nepal.”

The array of allegations of corruption, the minimal accountability those involved face, and the public fatigue make it clear that—regardless of the merits of any of the individual recent cases—corruption has permeated all levels of the public and private sector in Nepal. As Nepal embraces democracy through a hard-won constitution and long overdue elections, I wonder whether endemic corruption will deprive the country of yet another decade of potential growth. I certainly hope it will not.

Corruption can corrode and undermine a democracy and suffocate economic growth. At its core, it is the misuse of power for private gain. It misdirects money that could be used to feed children, supply schools, or build infrastructure; it facilitates economic inequality and fuels organized crime; and—if it persists—corruption can contribute to national and regional insecurity and destabilization.

Citizen role

For the past five years, Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index shows that Nepal has been seen to be between the 116th and 139th most corrupt country in the world. In 2013, 85 percent of Nepalis who responded to the Global Corruption Barometer’s public perception survey saw corruption as a problem, while 72 percent said it was on the rise. Only 13 percent thought the government’s actions to fight corruption had been effective. The data suggest that the Nepali public perceives the top three

most corrupt institutions in Nepal to be political parties, the police, and the civil service.

According to data from Nepal’s Office of the Auditor General, in fiscal year 2014/15 total irregularities stood at Rs 48 billion (5 percent of Nepal’s annual budget). At best, Nepal has a huge image problem in that it is widely viewed as being riddled with corruption. At worst, Nepal has a huge corruption problem—readers know from their own experience where exactly Nepal rests on this spectrum. Regardless of where that point is, Nepal and Nepalis will suffer for it. And it doesn’t have to be this way. Nepal has now completed local elections across the country and is on the brink of provincial and parliamentary elections. As the political transition and upheaval that began two decades ago gives way to a new, constitutionally-enshrined federal system, Nepali leaders have a chance to say that “I will not permit corruption on my watch, *ma khandina!*”

In the complex process of implementing the new federal system and fiscal decentralization, I and many others worry that only a few watchdogs are closely monitoring the flows of state funding. Post-elections, there lurks the very real possibility that some individuals and parties will attempt to recover campaign expenses and repay favors. Therefore, it is up to Nepali citizens and civil society to become civic watchdogs and ensure these practices do not go unchecked. It’s time to stop accepting corruption as the norm. No more saying *yastai ho, ke garne?*

Hard, not impossible

Countering corruption and preventing further entrenchment is not easy; however, it is important to understand how huge the costs of corruption are, especially for a developing country like Nepal. A recent estimate put the global annual cost of bribery alone at US \$1.5 to \$2 trillion (roughly 2 percent of global GDP). The overall economic and social costs of corruption are likely to be even larger, since bribes constitute only one aspect of the possible forms of corruption, not including costs and inefficiencies from issues such as nepotism, cartels, or patronage. Attacking endemic corruption is necessarily a political undertaking—it requires political will, modeling appropriate conduct, transparency, effective oversight, and consistent accountability. As I wrote just a few months ago, democracy is and ought to be messy, but it should also be fair.

The United States has itself struggled with corruption, and our system of checks and balances is designed to enhance transparency and reduce the ability of individuals to personally benefit through biased application of public duties. However, at times this has been a daunting challenge. In the

1860s and 70s, “political machines” dominated elected positions and extracted exorbitant amounts of money from rapidly growing cities. Patronage and clientelism were the norm, and our nation’s poor and marginalized suffered disproportionately. It was our independent civil society and news media that ultimately stepped in to serve as *de facto* oversight bodies to expose the entrenched corruption. Our judiciary then stepped in to enforce the law.

For the United States, this marked the beginning of public demand for—and government response to—merit-based civil service reform, which ushered out the spoils system that filled government posts through patronage, among other reforms. Our challenges with corruption continue, but we are committed to strong oversight mechanisms to identify and prosecute cases that emerge.

Preserving democratic gains

Countless studies suggest that the single most effective ingredient for ensuring the success of transparency and anti-corruption initiatives is the joining of hands between a nation’s government and its civil society. The Open Government Partnership (OGP) was launched in 2011 to provide an international platform for exactly that. It does so by bringing together reformers committed to making their governments more open, accountable, and responsive to citizens. Since its inception, OGP has grown from 8 to 75 participating governments, representing one-third of the earth’s population. In each of these countries, government and civil society are working together to develop and implement ambitious open government reforms. As a proud member of the OGP, the United States has established and is implementing our own Open Government National Action Plan.

Nepal—which ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption the same year OGP was launched—is eligible to join OGP. And elements of the Nepali government and civil society are already taking important actions against corruption. In 2017—a year in which Nepal has made significant strides toward cementing its constitution and democracy through elections—the country has an opportunity to enshrine its commitments and set a more transparent and corruption-free stage on which to meet the demands of the future. The Global Corruption Barometer tells us that 86 percent of Nepalis believe they have the power to stop corruption. While the fight against endemic corruption is multifaceted, Nepal’s government can take an important step toward changing the status quo by endorsing the Open Government Declaration and joining OGP. 🌱

(Source: <http://www.myrepublica.com/news/27876/>)

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	Taranath Dahal: Executive Chief, coordinates overall organizational and administrative affairs		
	Krishna Sapkota: Planning and Policy Advisor responsible for project design and planning and provides advisory support on policy affairs.		
	Narayan Ghimire: Media Monitoring Officer, who coordinates media focused initiatives		
	Aruna Adhikari: Finance and Administration Officer, looks after accounting and administrative affairs and performs responsibilities as the Information Officer.		
	Nanu Maiya Khadka: Gender Monitoring Officer, responsible for monitoring media content on gender perspectives		
	Kumar Chaulagain: Program Assistant		
	Manju Ojha: Front Desk Assistant		
	Kamal Poudel: Driver		
	Ganga Kumari Poudel: Office Assistant		
	Project Staffs: Sanjeeb Ghimire- Project Manager-EEMIR Project Bishal Dahal- Project Manager-SUSASAN Project Bhawana Poddar- Program Officer-EEMIR Project Bobbish Dhakal- Associate Finance Officer-EEMIR Project Ashmita Pokharel- Legal Officer- SEFAS Project Sabin Rimal- M&E Officer- SEFAS Project		
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
	Support to Enable Environment for Free, Accountable and Sustainable Media in Nepal (SEFAS)-No News is Bad News.	Free Press Unlimited (FPU)	4th May 2017
	Sustainable use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal (SUSASAN)	CECI	17th April 2017
	Increased internet literacy for better protection of FoE	IFEX	July 15, 2017
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	Chairperson: Hari Binod Adhikari, Executive Chief: Tara Nath Dahal		
Decision Making Process	General Assembly: Making policies, rules and regulations of organization Executive committee: Formulation of action plans as per constitution of organization, rules and regulation Management team: Running projects and daily operational affairs and reporting timely to the Executive Committee.		
Past and Current Activities	Please follow the link: http://freedomforum.org.np/content/category/activities/		
Information Officer	Aruna Adhikari		
Financial Information	Freedom Forum received grants amounting Rs. 6,047,975 (July to September 2017)		
Official Website	www.freedomforum.org.np		
Publications of Freedom Forum	Freedom Forum has over 50 Publications (printed) Please Follow the Link: http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/		
Annual Report	http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/reports/annual-reports/		
Mechanism for Information Dissemination	Websites- http://www.freedomforum.org.np/ ; www.nepalpressfreedom.org , and Newsletter-Free Expression		

More equality for women in the media



Over three quarters of the media in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is by or about men. When women are in the media, it is almost always in the role of mother, victim of violence, housewife or model. Fédération des Radios de Proximité de la R.D. Congo (FRPC) wants more equality between men and women in the media; both when it comes to the makers as well as the topics of the program.



Free Press Unlimited and FRPC provide female journalists with equipment and give the required training so they can get working independently. This is an important step, because women are dependent on men when it comes to technique. Apart from the fact

that women have less knowledge, it is usually the men who own the recording and montage equipment.

Women central in media productions

The trainees put their recently gained knowledge and skills immediately into practice and each made a program with women in the leading role. The media productions deal with topics such as political participation of women, technical secondary education for girls and access to drinking water. The programs were broadcast by community radio stations where the journalists worked. In 2016, the FRPC trained 80 journalists from four rural provinces in DRC. 72 of them were women, one of whom is Rachel Bilonda.

Female journalists at radio station

Rachel Bilonda van Radio Diku Dietu: 'First I

was naive, and occasionally too tolerant when it comes to unjust distribution of roles at home and in the radio station where I work. Since the training I have more confidence to challenge the prejudices about female journalists and women generally. I now take much more charge of my career and life.'

More positive image of women in the media

Through the training and programs, FRPC wants to encourage inhabitants of DR Congo to think critically about the role and image of women in the media and beyond. Because media where men and women have an equal role, can give women more confidence and inspire them to claim their rightful place in other areas too. 🌱

(Source: <https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/projects/more-equality-for-women-in-the-media>)

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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