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Co-Founder and CEO, e-Sewa and
IT Consultant to Prime Minister

ISSN 2091215-3





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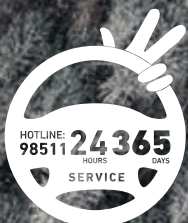
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What makes work meaningful... for me what tops the list is empathy and focus, whether in business, in personal relationships or in a profession. In recent days, meeting people from varied working backgrounds, I often see and hear a lot of frustration when we talk about the state of governance in the country, the indifferent work culture, and the rising levels of corruption.

There is a lot of good intention when we set goals as a nation, as organisations and as individuals. But something happens in-between that derails people from working with clarity to meet the objective. And even the person with the best intention is left hitting the wall. Case in point would be the ongoing South Asian Games and the Visit Nepal 2020. I see innovation and creativity being sacrificed at the doors of mediocrity in the approach of our organisational abilities. We are happy to not take firm and timely decisions and work at the very last minute to just about get things done. I don't see how this can even remotely appeal to the youth of the country or send a powerful message to the rest of the world on our capabilities.

Misspelled boards, flexes hanging disproportionately across cities, make do visual content on television are what people can immediately see and these basics actually tell you a lot about the organisational approach. If you can't do the small things well, how can you do the bigger things well?

I also see that we like to spread ourselves thin. Why not set a few small but meaningful goals rather than try and do everything and waste resources with little impact. Unnecessary meetings and deliberations, improper execution and complete acceptance of mediocrity have become the norm of governance, self interest aside.

Our ministers and government secretaries should be more worried about doing bigger justice to their portfolios by focusing on their job and working on the macro issues. Worrying about the website content, running around cutting ribbons, or pushing their personal agenda should be of least priority.

If only we looked at our work with more empathy and focus, we would understand what real impact means and actually do more meaningful work. Ultimately, it is the tax payers' money that the government spends. Every tax payer should hold the government accountable for every rupee spent, for every decision that is made, and to ensure that execution of work justifies the resources spent.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charu Chadha'.

Charu Chadha
editor

BIZ INDICATORS

FOREX MARKET	04.12.2019	04.11.2019	Year ago
USD	114.38	113.00	112.43
GBP	148.61	146.18	143.01
Chinese Renminbi (Yuan)	16.21	16.06	16.32
Indian Rupee (INR 100)	160.00	160.00	160.00
Euro	126.66	146.18	127.35
Australian Dollar	-	-	-
TOURISM	2019(Nov)	2018(Nov)	%Change
Tourist arrivals from India	56,583	43,563	29.89%
Tourist arrivals from Other Countries	88,789	75,625	17.41%
Total arrivals (by air only)	93,256	72,658	28.35%
GOVERNMENT SECURITIES	Highest	Lowest	Weighted Avg.
Discount rate of T-bill (Subject to latest issuance as on 2076/02/20)			
Treasury bills (28 days)	-	-	-
Treasury bills (91 days)	2.450	1.100	1.247
Treasury bills (182 days)	3.590	3.000	3.440
Treasury bills (364 days)	3.640	3.099	3.194
PRICE INDICES	Sep19/20(p)	Sep18/19(p)	Sep17/18(p)
National Consumer Price Index (base year 2014/15 = 100)	132.56	124.82	119.24

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सगरमाथा सिमेन्ट

जुनी जुनीलाई...

हामी आभारी छौं

नेपाल सरकार अर्थ मन्त्रालयको आन्तरिक राजस्व विभाग द्वारा आयोजित आठौँ राष्ट्रिय कर दिवस २०७६ को अवसरमा माननिय अर्थमन्त्री ज्यूद्वारा घोराही सिमेन्ट इण्डस्ट्रि प्रा. लि. लाई सम्मान प्रदान गर्दै २०६५/८/१ देखि २०७६ असार मसान्त सम्म समय मै मूल्य अभिवृद्धि कर विवरण र कर बुझाएको करदाता मध्य आ.व. २०७८/७९ मा सबै भन्दा बढी मू. अ. कर दाखिला गर्न सफल भए बापत विगत दुई वर्ष देखि लगातार यो उच्च सम्मान-पत्रद्वारा सम्मानित भएका छौं ।



सातौँ राष्ट्रिय कर दिवस - २०७५



आठौँ राष्ट्रिय कर दिवस - २०७६

विगत दुई वर्ष देखि सफलता प्राप्तिको अवसरमा हामी हाम्रा घोराही सिमेन्टका समर्पित सहकर्मीहरुका साथै संघ संस्था तथा देशभरका हाम्रा अधिकृत वितरकहरु, बैंक र वित्तीय संस्था जसले यो उचाईमा हामीलाई ल्याइपुऱ्याउन अतुलनीय योगदान दिनु भएको छ, वहाँहरु सबैमा हार्दिक आभार एवं कृतज्ञता जाहेर गर्दै आगामी वर्षहरुमा पनि यस्तै साथ, सहयोग एवं समर्थनको अपेक्षा राख्दछौं ।



IN THE LEAD

ASGAR ALI
CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, E-SEWA
AND IT CONSULTANT TO RT. HON.
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"LEADERSHIP IS A PASSIONATE PATH
WHICH INVOLVES LEADERS MOVING PAST
CHALLENGES AND INSPIRING PEOPLE
AROUND THEM."

Yulia Koirala
Founder & Director, Sushila Arts
Academy

LEADERSHIP

WRITE TO US AT

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**“PROPER FUNCTIONING PUBLIC
TRANSPORTATION INDICATES
TWO THINGS: SOCIAL EQUITY AND
EFFICIENCY.”**

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**“IT IS ONLY WHEN THE COUNTRY IS
PROSPEROUS THAT ITS CITIZENS
COMMAND RESPECT AND PRESTIGE IN
THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA.”**

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ASGAR ALI > **Co-Founder and CEO, e-Sewa
and IT Consultant to Rt. Hon. Prime Minister K.P Sharma Oli**

Text by Ujeena Rana

Asgar Ali is a patient man. The interview was punctuated with phone calls. Even from his succinct replies, it was evident that the topics of the calls gravitated towards pressing matters; but when he got off the phone, his voice did not hint at urgency. The phone calls did not sour his mood. He did not sweat on the issues discussed on the phone when he was back on the interview, and even if he housed them at the back of his mind, he camouflaged his emotions well.

Ali is primarily a coder but he has proved his mettle in management by being awarded with the title of Young CEO of the Year in 2018. He does not seek validation, but awards matter even to CEOs. "In essence, the success of e-Sewa is a team effort. It is just that I happen to be at the forefront of it. Being the front face of the team, I was at the receiving end of the recognition," he reflects on his achievement. "More than anything, the award and exposure brought me in contact with youth who are motivated by the success story of a home-grown tech company," shares Ali. He elaborates, "While the award might not benefit me personally, it does state the 'we can grow a brand in Nepal' message to young entrepreneurs harboring big dreams. We have been able to establish eSewa as a brand. Nepal has only a handful of successful stories of startups turning into big brands. The youth are motivated by local success stories such as ours."

The company is part of F1 Soft International, a software company. Biswas Dhakal, Subash Sharma and Asgar Ali had formed F1 Soft when they were engineering students. "Biswas takes care of the overall business," he states. Biswas Dhakal makes frequent visits throughout the interview. Ali makes no bone about the fact that it is under Dhakal's leadership that F1Soft and e-Sewa are marching ahead. The founders at eSewa have thrown their weight behind Dhakal, recognising him as the unopposed leader. "Ego intervenes when it is about personal benefits and achievements, but if it is for the good of the company, then everyone supports the decision. Sacrificing our conscience at the altar of personal gain is not the case with e-Sewa," comments Ali. He makes running a company, and in their case, two companies, sound easy. But that is what the best of companies are based on: teamwork. The company's wellbeing is above the individual's wellbeing, and it is practiced seamlessly at eSewa, it appears.

IN THE
LEAD



Chance or Choice

Both his father and grandfather were involved in the textile business. "However, my father did not want me to get into business but do something different and for which education was paramount," he shares. He was sent to a boarding school. "As a child, I could not fathom why my father wanted to send me away," he reflects and adds "but it had to be done because he didn't want me to undergo the same struggles as him." The family, which originally hails from Argakhachi, later shifted to Dang and then to Butwal. Ali did his I.Sc from Amrit Science Campus, after which he wanted to study Civil Engineering but since he could not get in, he saw a future in IT.

His father's conscious decision not to involve within the family business; failing to get through the civil engineering entrance exam and then choosing IT, meeting Biswas Dhakal and establishing eSewa are what he considers the major episodes of his life. These are the landmarks that define his journey.

The Start of an Idea

"We were a young team, each of us was geared to contribute and establish a digital presence in the country," reminisces Ali about the inception of F1 Soft. Ali did his B.E. in Software Engineering from Nepal College of Information Technology (NCIT). Three friends—Biswas Dhakal, Asgar Ali, Subash Sharma started F1Soft International in 2003. "Opening a software company didn't require much at that time. You just had to bring computers from home; put them together and look for work. We wanted to focus on transaction banking services. After a year, we developed the SMS and mobile banking software. I laid the groundwork for that. We gained more knowledge about the industry and the concept of e-Sewa was seeded," he narrates.

As the company got bigger, responsibilities were divided among the three so that focus could be strongly maintained. "I had to look after the management of eSewa. I switched roles from developer to CEO. Subash Sharma takes care of F1 Soft and Biswas looks after the overall business," he briefs about the power-sharing of the company.

But it was not an easy transition for Ali who was a coder, a developer; management was alien to him. He breaks down his definition of management, "Management is all about getting things in place; assembling everything. You have a vision and assemble the necessary components. Earlier, I, as a developer, was only a part of that component. So, my area of focus got changed - from a micro level to a macro level."

But the country was not digitally forward when they started the company. "We considered that as an opportunity," he shares. If everything was already in place, possibly, they would not have got the head-start. Ali reminisces, "Everyone had mobile and every mobile had internet as well but people had been using it for entertainment purposes only. Distanced from entertainment, we felt the need to introduce services to facilitate day-to-day activities."

There was a time when the country only had eSewa for 'online payment'; now there are other players like Khalti, IME Pay, iPay as well. "eSewa is a platform. Its size does not have limitations. It is a page for online business in the country. Physical cash related transactions dominate; and digital transaction is less than 2%, which means 98% of the market is vacant. eSewa gave hope for possibility of online business in Nepal. It created one level of success story," he expresses. Looking at this success, others joined the bandwagon. "We gained success in proof of concept (POC) but to generate business,

we are still working on the same less than 2% market share. Earlier eSewa was working alone. Now others have joined in which is actually good for us."

Speaking on the reach of eSewa, Ali shares, "In Nepal, there are over two crore mobile users of which 1 crore 30 lakhs are smartphone users. 25 lakhs are eSewa users; the number is less than 20% of the total population; enrollment alone is less than 20%. We want to increase that to at least 50%." The way he understands it is that for them to meet the target, users need a purpose. He juxtaposes eSewa and Facebook. To open a Facebook account, the purpose is to get connected with friends. In the case of eSewa, you need to register, have money in your wallet. So, eSewa is not like Facebook. It is, in fact, a need-based service."

He says that whatever eSewa has managed to do till date is just scratching the surface. The platform can accommodate limitless services. eSewa has attained heights but "the tech world is ever changing and updating itself," he informs rejecting any idea of remaining inert.

Private life

Even if his life trajectory covers an original route, there is a common denominator he shares with most of the world's busy and successful men—sacrificing family time. "Well, family time has to wait. As of now, there are no options," he dismisses the subject in a matter-of-fact manner adding, "I go home only to get sleep," he says.

But his wife, Rehana Khatun deserves a special mention even if it is his professional achievements that are being discussed here. Asgar Ali shares, "Rehana is now used to my absence. Since the last 10 years, I go home just to get some sleep. Get up, get out, come back, and get sleep. In repeat mode," he encapsulates his daily routine. The couple

has a seven-year-old daughter, Arshiya Ali.

The PM's Consultant

Ali's duties as the PM's IT Consultant have now dwarfed his CEO duties at eSewa. "Even though, it is just a consultant's job, all my time is consumed by it," he informs. Ali doesn't receive any recommendation for this role. "I was certain since day 1 that I won't take any services, perks or allowance. I wanted nothing in return because I didn't go there for money," he explains.

"Under their policy, consultants are paid but I made myself clear that I don't want anything," he informs. It is a pro-bono job for him. While profit-making is not inherently bad, to have that aim trump over the vital belief of serving the country made getting paid for this role seem wrong to him.

By his own admission, Ali agreed to the job since the incumbent government endorses 'Sambriddha Nepal, Sukhi Nepali' and he wants to contribute to the prosperity of the nation and happiness of its people. His believes if by lending his expertise, he can help the government achieve its objective, then there is no better feeling than that.

Today when the bureaucracy functions at snail's pace and what could have been accomplished in two days gets stretched to two months or even years, he is hopeful that all the toiling will one day materialise into an app. "I am bearing the responsibilities of an advisor. And advisors are not executioners. We just present ideas and request the team to execute them," he states.

Ali reckons Nepalis will be happy when the governance is IT based. "Sukhi Nepali" is tantamount to the citizens not having to suffer; government services are hassle-free so IT should be utilised in abundance."

About his appointment at the PM office, he shares that



“
Digital transaction is less than 2%, which means 98% of the market is vacant.”

it was the PM's Chief Advisor, Bishnu Rimal's doing. He says, "He had been observing our work and growth at eSewa. His concept is to have something similar at the government level - a single app that can provide all government services."

In November, the PM's private secretariat including advisors jointly resigned following the PM's decision for a renewed secretariat. But he was among the few whose resignation was denied by the PM. "Possibly, the PM thinks

that my job is not complete yet," he shares. In the 2.0 version of his reinstatement as the PM's IT Consultant, his job will be to continue the work he has been dedicatedly performing for the last 19 months.

Since he works closely with the incumbent government and his close circle of advisors, does he share their political ideologies? He answers, "I am not there on a political assignment. It is an apolitical position. The government's

political stand does not interfere with my working as I am a tech guy. I am there only on a brief appointment."

His tenure as the IT Consultant to the PM has not been all sunshine and rainbows though. He had to bear the brunt of charges and conjectures, "The media tried to smear my image," he says. In the current climate of tech companies like Facebook, Google facing the indictment charges of abusing public's private data, Ali was accused

of the same. He was blamed of abusing his position to pressure various authorities to provide private and sensitive information concerning the public. Eyebrows were also raised given his appointment which allows him unhindered access to public's private data and his involvement with eSewa which is a company that engages in electronic financial transactions. The conflict of interest was pointed out. Concerns over abuse of citizens' information at the



hands of eSewa floated. But he did not let those accusations and hearsay deter him.

The KP Sharma Oli government is 'for' technology and Ali believes that going digitally forward is the need of the hour. When the PM started video conferencing with his council of ministers, it was a signal that the deal is for real.

Entrepreneurship

When asked to comment on the entrepreneurship climate in Nepal, Ali resorted to narrowing down to the tech scene in Nepal. "We are dependent on foreign countries for a number of things. Youths need not labour much, just segregate the things we are dependent on and the things on which we are self-reliant. Then, list down the borrowed services and imported products and figure out the ones you can work on within. Also, government needs to support the initiatives. Things are possible; it can be done. We did it at eSewa. We solved a need at the local level," he says.

He advises the youth that if they want to do business, they ought to find a gap in the market. "It is not primarily about earning money. First things first, fulfill the gap," he advises.

Nagarik Adhikar App

The app that Ali is helping the government with will integrate all the government agencies' works. All his endeavours will eventually ease the life of the citizen through a digital platform in the form of an app.

"By the time I am done with my duties, I can write a book about my experience working with the government. It is also a real test of my patience. In the private sector, decisions are not postponed for indefinite time, but at the government level, it takes months for a singular decision to be approved. It is not the 'work' but the decision making

and approval aspects that is the most taxing and demands the most time. But I have not lost my patience yet. Inaction and delayed decisions can thwart the potential for rapid action, improvement, growth and development," he states.

However, the app service comes with a condition. To make use of Nagarik Adhikar app, "the first requirement is that the mobile number you use for the app must be registered in your name. Only then will you be able to use it."

"In about two months time, we will release phase I with 2-3 services," he informs. "Today a person's identity is his/her mobile number even though we agree or not. Every Nepali citizen should use the mobile SIM card number registered under his/her name. A circular for the same has already been released. Nagarik Adhikar App will then be made available to them. You can then access all your government data to your mobile number."

On the usefulness of the app, Ali reports, "Suppose you need to have your PAN card prepared, you have to visit the Income Tax Department with a photocopy of your citizenship and one copy of your photo. Your personal details are at the Home Ministry, while your photo is with the Election Commission. To get the data from these agencies, why trouble the citizen? The app will integrate all the government agencies which has the personal data of the citizens stored in their software and the particular government agency that needs it. This creates a sync between inter-governmental functions and eases public needs."

"It has been 19 months since my appointment at the PM's office. First, I visited all the government agencies with the concept that PAN, license, passport, basai-sarai, marriage, birth certificates should be done via the app. Some of the agencies are technically sound. They have all the data but the others are neither technically

sound nor have data," he narrates.

"In these 19 months, we gave all the agencies a timeframe to update their system and to work on the data. Come to think of it, Home Ministry's data is unused. We are given the citizenship certificate, we are asked to bring the photocopy of the same everywhere for government services. But the data is already there with the government. Why ask people for something which the government already has access to?" is his argument.

Ali believes that citizens will experience 'a drastic change' while visiting government offices for services. According to Ali, we have the architecture and the fundamentals to make Nepal digitally equipped. "We are not at zero level. Every government agency has software system and database. The only place we are failing at is 'integration'; we are not integrated. Therefore, the software system data of one government agency does not recognise the software of another government agency. In fact, when applying for license, you need not submit anything. In the app, when you visit license and click on the 'apply' button, the system should do the work for you, gathering information required to process the procurement of the license.

Producing Able Manpower

It is said that the only thing more expensive than investing in education is not investing in education. "In Nepal, the tech industry and academia are distant. The industry does not even have the slightest inkling as to what the academia is teaching. And what the industry requires, the academia does not pay any heed to. Based on questions like 'the number of wives Prithvi Narayan Shah had' we are chosen for Lok Sewa," he protests.

There is not much practical know-how imparted to students except in the field of medicine.

Even tech students are devoid of real-time experiences. An engineering student studies almost 48 courses in a span of four years; and just the basic of everything. When they graduate, the individual only has an engineering degree but not much exposure of the real world.

"Keeping that in view, the current government, under the name of the late Madan Bhandari is planning to build a Tech University in the outskirts of Kathmandu," he states and adds, "Industry is never constant; but it's different with academia. We may contribute to some extent to make things more effective but it is difficult to take both along together. In a way, we are planning to act as a bridge between the industry and academia so that depending on the demand of the industry, we will produce the required manpower."

It has been a year that F1 Soft has acquired a college, Swastik College in Bhaktapur which is an IT college. "Our desire is to produce and ready the manpower needed in the industry. We don't interfere in the daily functioning of the college; it has a separate team. Whatever the tech industry requires to function, we have included in the course syllabus - not a university course though, but something to augment students' learning and for their easy placement in the workforce. That way, we are building the required human force. Practical knowledge is provided from the onset with few hours dedicated to our own syllabus so that in four years, the students are industry ready." **B**



SLOWING REMITTANCE RAISES CONCERNS

Text by - B360 Correspondent

The country has witnessed negative growth of remittance in the first three months of the ongoing fiscal 2019-20 by 4.6% in dollar terms. It is almost 5% negative growth compared to the corresponding period of the previous fiscal. The country has received Rs 230 billion from remittance in the first three months, whereas inflow was witnessed at Rs 242 billion in the same period last year, according to Nepal Rastra Bank.

Remittance, which is a major source of foreign exchange earnings, could decline further as outflow of migrant workers to the major labour destination, Malaysia, heavily dropped last year. Suman Pokharel, President of the Nepal Remitters Association and CEO of IME Remit has said that remittance growth picked up in the first three months of this fiscal

as Nepalis working abroad sent money home during the festivals mainly in Dashain.

Remittance has been lubricating the economy since early 2000 as outflow of migrant workers started to rise consistently. As the country is largely dependent on remittance for maintaining its foreign exchange reserves and Balance of Payment, decline in remittance poses near-term risk for the economy. The country had faced similar challenges in fiscal years 2009-10 and 2010-11 following the global financial crisis. Decline in remittance hit every segment of the economy from financial to trading sectors and even small enterprises.

Why this de-acceleration?

Decline in the number of migrant workers is the major reason behind the slowing down of remittance. In the last fiscal 2018/19, there was 32.6% decline in outflow of migrant workers. As per statistics released by the Department of

Foreign Employment (DoFE), a total of 243,868 people had left the country to seek job opportunities in foreign countries. Such numbers were 362,023 in fiscal 2017/18 and 398,978 in 2016/17.

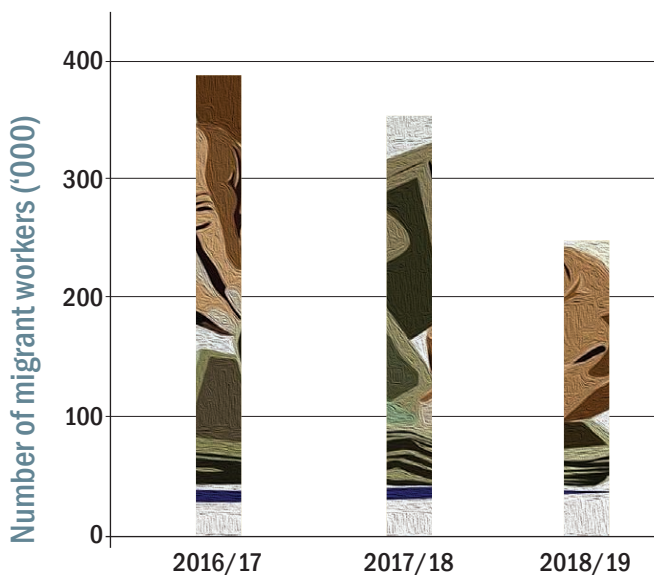
Number of migrant workers has dropped steeply since 2016/17. Between 16/17 - 17/18, the numbers has dropped by 9.3%. A major setback is decline in number of migrant workers to Malaysia. The DoFE report shows 90.4% decline in outflow of migrant workers to the major labour destination Malaysia in 2018/19 in comparison to 2017/18.

Malaysia was the major labour destination of Nepali migrant workers in the past. But since the formation of KP Oli government, erstwhile Minister for the Labour, Employment and Social Security, Gokarna Bista had put a stance to halt labour supply to Malaysia until the vendors involved in visa

processing and health checkups who were allegedly cheating the workers be changed. Though former Minister Bista had signed an agreement with his Malaysian counterpart to make transparency in fees and recruitment of labour to Malaysia, the process to change vendors was prolonged. As a result, aspirant migrant workers to Malaysia were not allowed to go to Malaysia. Bista did not compromise and Malaysia dilly dallied in changing vendors.

Major Woes

Drop in remittances could affect the BoP situation which has been gradually improving after a huge deficit in the last fiscal. The government might have to further curb imports but this will affect growth and government revenue. There will be a slowdown in every sector of the economy, according to Economist Keshav Acharya, "Contraction in wholesale and retail trade will affect the financial sector as their non-



(Source: Department of Foreign Employment)

performing loans might rise, industrial sector will face lack of demand of their products and there will be job cuts.”

He said that Nepal's over dependence on remittance to make the foreign exchange reserve robust is highly risky. Remittance is temporary - any disturbance in gulf nations which are the major labour

destinations - could easily affect the inflow of remittances, according to Acharya, “The country has experienced the bitter truth after the global financial crisis of 2008-09 as remittance plunged sharply at that time. The oil exporting economies were hit hard due to fall in the oil prices as financial crisis loomed.”

Remittance for Nepal is often described as Dutch Syndrome. Nepal is largely dependent on remittance to strengthen foreign exchange reserves like the Netherlands was entirely reliant on oil and gas during the 1970s.

Urgent Call for Diversification of Forex Earnings

According to the World Bank's recent report, 10% drop in remittance could hit the country's growth by three percentage points. World Bank has said that Nepal's over-dependence on remittance as a single tool to strengthen foreign exchange reserves is an inherently risky strategy as it is vulnerable to external shocks. It has urged to diversify the foreign exchange earnings through tourism, foreign direct investment (FDI) and through boosting exports.

If the country does not take steps to diversify forex earnings, it can face adverse impact if slowdown in remittances continues, according to Economist Chandan Sapkota. He said that the country should focus on attracting FDI in production and infrastructure development

to expand the production base of the country and generate employment in the country. “If Nepalis working in Gulf countries lose their job due to any uncertainty in Gulf economies, they will come back,” he said, “If we cannot create job opportunities, they will remain unemployed except the few who start their own enterprise.” Currently, over four million Nepalis are working abroad and most of them are working in Gulf and Malaysia.

Looking at the global capital flow, FDI comes in first position. Flow of FDI witnessed USD 1300 billion in 2018, remittances worth USD 600 and Official Development Assistance (ODA) worth USD 130 billion. However, in the case of Nepal, remittance comes in the first position with USD 7.79 billion, which is equivalent to 25% of the country's Gross Domestic Product, ODA comes second with USD 1.15 billion and FDI with USD 113 million in 2018-19. To change this pattern of capital flow, the country must work to build competitive investment climate in the country to welcome foreign investors. **B**

BUSINESS 360°

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Business 360° is a magazine that promises to deliver on quality business news content, profiles of entrepreneurs and leaders, features on issues that matter, articles that assess and analyze policy and delivery mechanisms in the world of trade and commerce, international and national business highlights of the month besides economic and management trends.

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Information Technology Bill 2075

Technology advances are rapid and new developments come up every few months, however the existing legal framework in relation to digital technology, i.e. the Electronic Transactions Act 2008 (2063) (ETA), is yet to be updated of such changes. Very recently, Nepal Electronic Payment System claimed that Nepali banks lost millions in a cyber-heist wherein foreign hackers used electronic cards to illegally withdraw money. Instances like these point out the urgent need for regulation of technology.

In light of this vacuum, the Information Technology Bill 2075 (the Bill) seeks to provide an overarching legal framework for information technology, protect rights of the individuals using internet by inter alia imposing liabilities on information service providers, as well as individuals themselves and provide data security.

The Bill puts onus on the service provider to inform the concerned individual purpose for which their personal data is being collected. The information collected can only be used for the purpose specified. Further, personal information can only be broadcasted or transmitted to a third party after obtaining approval from the concerned individual. The Bill also stipulates that after the purpose for which the data was collected is accomplished, the data needs to be destroyed within seven days. In comparison to the earlier regime social network including Facebook and Instagram will now have to incorporate more safeguards in order to protect our personal information. For instance, as per the terms and conditions of Instagram, it retains the non-exclusive right to use, distribute, modify, run, copy or display the content that we upload on Instagram. By agreeing to



these terms and conditions, Instagram has our consent to use the content we upload. However, the consent given appears to be unconditional and not for a specific purpose as required under the Bill. Further, as per the Bill there are no clear terms about disposal of data after Instagram uses such content.

The Bill also prohibits any person from unauthorised breach of confidentiality, and this may include listening/ recording conversations without consent. It is yet to be seen how this provision will be tested in terms of balancing it with evidence laws. In addition to individuals, the Bill also puts onus on the service provider or person processing or storing electronic information to maintain confidentiality and inviolability.

The Bill also deals with scenarios where there is inappropriate content being circulated in social media. Circulation of inappropriate content can negatively impact the psyche of the viewers. To

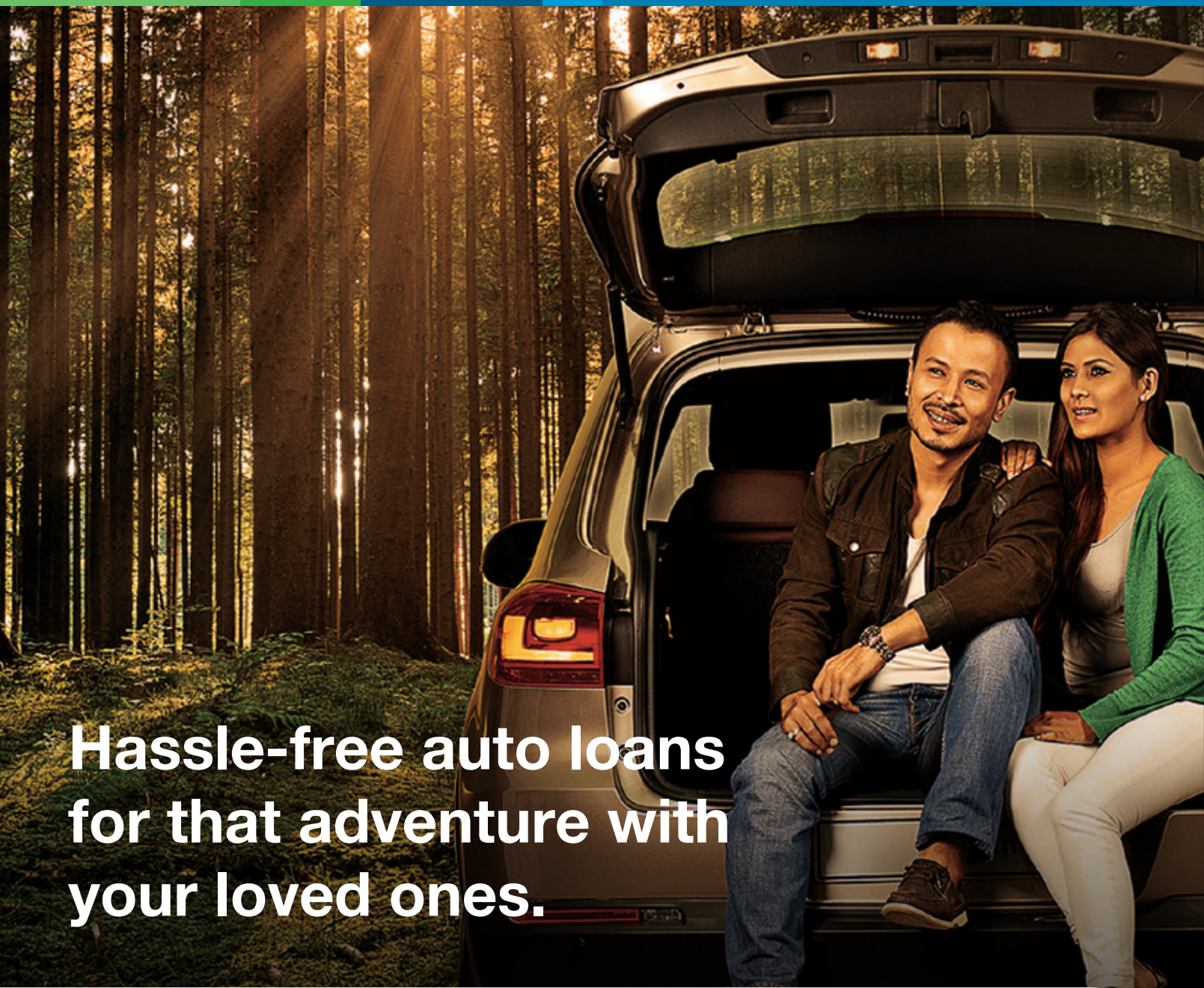
combat scenarios like this, the Bill empowers the court to direct social media network to remove any inappropriate content from its site. In terms of timeliness and efficiency, the Bill ought to authorise the Department of Information Technology, for such measures. The Court can then act as a check and balance to the acts of the Department.

Although this Bill resembles the way forward in the digital economy, but due to heavy criticism by the public and experts in the field, there have been issues with its implementation. The Bill had initially empowered the government to remove any content in social media platforms that was against government policy. After widespread criticism in relation to encroachment on freedom of speech and expression, the recent amendment has done away with this provision. The amendment has also removed liability of individuals in case of defamatory/ hate inciting statements online. These would then be addressed under

criminal laws of the country.

Under the latest amendment to the Bill, social networks with more than five lakh members are mandated to register in Nepal. This effort of the government has been severely criticized because the government is putting procedural hurdles on the very operation of social network. By making it difficult to operate, we are discentivising social networks to operate in Nepal. The country would face the risk of social networks not operating within its territory, which would negatively impact e-businesses dependent on such social networks. In line with the global economy moving towards a border less digital economy, Nepal would be shying away from digital advancement to negate its negative impact.

Though this issue of social network needs to be addressed, the other issues that impeded the implementation of the bill has been dealt with, increasing the prospects of the much needed legal framework for information technology. **B**

A man and a woman are sitting on the edge of the open trunk of a silver SUV. They are in a forest with tall trees and sunlight filtering through the leaves. The man is wearing a brown jacket and jeans, and the woman is wearing a green cardigan and white pants. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera.

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Business From The Heart

DOING GOOD FOR THE CUSTOMER IS GOOD FOR THE ACCOUNT BOOK TOO



Basant Chaudhary is a Poet, Writer, The Chairman of BLC and Basant Chaudhary Foundation. (feedback@basantchaudhary.com)

Why did Andrew Hoggard's book 'Business from the Heart' catch the corporate world's eye? The author is not known for any global business triumph. He managed businesses only in Australia and New Zealand for over 35 years, with most of the time devoted to the healthcare industry. Hoggard has not been part of management academia either. Yet his 2018 publication fortified his position as a motivational and guest speaker at organisations of multiple shades.

How did this happen? Reason: while most of us have our heart in business we seldom do business from the heart. This minor change of words actually denotes a world of difference.

Invariably, businesses are supposed to earn profits. Their success is measured by the health of their bottom-line. Breakthroughs on other fronts attract scant attention. With profit and profitability being the leading measures of business achievement, corporates tend to turn ruthless in accomplishing this goal.

This is where Hoggard steps in. He highlights the need of heart-centred business. In the process, he tries to bring out the best in us. By viewing life

from a prism different from the conventional one, he suggests, we can change ourselves and make the mind and the heart act in communion. When this truly happens, business processes get rid of their rough and abrasive edges. Business becomes more humane and the world is that much less hurt. A caring business is good business. But no business school can make you more caring. The transformation needs to come from within.

With all due respect to Hoggard, one would like to assert that business from the heart is nothing novel. It has always been there depending upon the person who ran the business, company or

competition is only increasing in intensity. Ensuring existence itself has become a challenge. Day in and day out, we hear news about companies going bankrupt, folding up or retrenching employees in large numbers. Seen on the face of it as smart business decisions, such moves have grave social repercussions. Their impact is all the more severe in developing and underdeveloped countries where a state-backed social security network is conspicuous by its absence. The situation is alarming. The government and the captains of industry need to focus on the looming crisis. They need to show more heart and be more sensitive towards

Another worrisome development is the growing clinical approach that many businesses adopt towards their employees and customers. We have been often told that customer is king. Is he? Ironical it may sound, but the fact is that customers are mere data for many consumer product behemoths. Customers are today wooed in a most brutal manner. They are manipulated through sly advertising and unscrupulous influencers. They are badgered by tele-calls, SMS volleys and questionable marketing and sales schemes.

There is no dearth of instances when the advertising claims of a corporate or its products are far from reality. Thousands of unsuspecting customers of financial products and services and real estate have lost their hard-earned savings to greedy and heartless businesses. The culprits are many but only a few are brought to book. Such is the nexus between avaricious business and authorities. One laments that this anarchic situation prevails the world over but more so in the economically backward countries where the writ of the law hardly prevails.

So what needs to be done to alter the current state of affairs in business?

Rasheed Ogunlaru, leading life and business coach and author of 'Soul Trader – Putting the Heart Back into Your Business', responds so pithily: "The world has changed. We want to run, work in, and buy from businesses that care about us – in tune with our values and in balance with our lives... Running a business from the heart is now a necessity. We're sick of businesses that don't care about us and just about our cash. Unless you love you, what you do, and those you serve, your health, home life,



conglomerate. If the person had a heart, then he or she viewed and ran the enterprise differently from mere number crunchers.

Hoggard's concept has drawn some attention because businesses, world over, are turning more and more profit-oriented. Thanks to growing globalisation and trade wars,

the underprivileged sections of our society.

Business is much more than merely making money. In fact, beyond a certain level of wealth creation all businesses should start functioning like trusts. After all, it is the trust between the capitalist and the labour that keeps an enterprise going. It is a sacrosanct social contract.

staff/supplier relationships or sales will suffer.”

The change in the business world is best characterised by the recent spurt in entrepreneurship. To survive and then to thrive, infant enterprises need to have a heart-to-heart link with their teams and the customer segment they have chosen to serve. It takes time and perseverance for entrepreneurs to strike roots. There is many a fall between the start and the goal. The journey is witness to much disdain and mocking by big business.

But how can we forget that the world's biggest companies today include names like Alphabet (Google), Microsoft, Amazon, Alibaba, Facebook, etc. which figured nowhere just a few decades ago. These ultra-successful companies are the product of the burning zeal of virtually resource-less and young entrepreneurs. Larry Page, Sergey Brin, Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos, Jack Ma, Mark Zuckerberg, etc. are the stuff of legends. Theirs is a heart-centered business; their mission was doing good. They have made our lives better and happier. They have delighted the customer.

No wonder, over 90% of the businesses over the free world fall in the small category. Their bond with their customers is marked by high level of compassion, creativity, courage, cooperation and communication. The same cannot be said about business giants. They have lost their soul somewhere along the way. The human touch is missing.

Just cast a glance at the micro and small businesses in Nepal. A majority of them are run by women. Millions of able-bodied males from poverty-struck society of our country have migrated to West Asian and other countries to eke out a living for their families here. The mantle to run the show has, therefore, fallen on our women, and they are doing the job splendidly. They run

businesses dotting our roads, streets and hamlets from the heart. They are the keepers and protectors of our society. They are doing work that matters. Their example needs to be emulated by Nepal's established businesses which seem to be fascinated by the ruthlessness of the West's big business.

However, there is a false notion doing the rounds in our social and business circles. Business from the heart is often viewed as an 'effeminate' system in a largely male dominated world. It is accused of missing the killer instinct generally viewed as vital for business success. Nothing could be farther from the truth. To move up the business ladder you need constant planning, thinking and strategizing. And to succeed at that you need to be in sync with the changing needs of the customer. You need to be compassionate enough to empathise with the customer's requirement and change your business style and product line suitably. Only a woman's heart and sensitivity is capable of accomplishing this.

Returning to our friend Andrew Hoggard, let me bring to you a few relevant quotes from him: "A great business comprises good people and systems coming together to provide the customer with an extraordinary experience" and "It's about everything that you do, by being motivated from the inside out. It's about seeing life not from a set of rules, but from a perspective where you want to, and long to do things for others."

Although Hoggard's business-from-the-heart philosophy focuses more on the sales function, I view it as a trigger to include the entire gamut of business. Quite a few business personalities have excelled using the heart as their compass. Profits came as a natural by-product.

It's time we grew the tribe. **B**

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HOW TO PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MORALS ARE

Social responsibility means using the impact you have on the world to promote change—and your spending habits are a huge source of local, vocal activism.



DR. LAURA WILLIAMS TEACHES COMMUNICATION STRATEGY TO UNDERGRADUATES AND EXECUTIVES. SHE IS A PASSIONATE ADVOCATE FOR CRITICAL THINKING, INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES, AND THE OXFORD COMMA.

Our beliefs and our behaviours dictate our buying decisions at least as much as our desires. Or they should, if we're paying attention.

When you spend an extra \$2 or \$5 on hormone-free, free-range eggs, you're

purchasing some reassurance.

You can reward the farmers who agree with your views about how chickens should be treated, or what they should be fed. But in an increasingly complex supply

chain, how practical is it to express your values through your buying choices?

Millennials (entering their prime earning years) will overtake boomers next year as the generation with the largest purchasing power. They'll leapfrog the smaller Gen X, with larger numbers more than making up for their lower incomes. That means corporations, especially retailers, are eager to cater to millennial desires.

Gen Z, which will be the richest generation in human history, is already generating discussion by being choosier about brands that reflect—or reject—its values. By voting every day (at the cash register or online cart) young people are leading the way

“Economics is all about trade-offs, and conscious choice encourages us to navigate an imperfect world as best we can.”

in supporting companies that prioritize (or at least publicise) making the world better, in addition to making products they love.

Conscious Consumption in a Complicated World

Economics is all about trade-offs, and conscious choice encourages us to navigate an imperfect world as best we can.

Vegans try to avoid all foods of animal origin. Many people feel strongly about supporting “fair trade” coffee and cocoa, even though it's more expensive and the fairness to small farmers is dubious.

Some Christian conservatives make a point of supporting Chick-Fil-A, because they vocally support

traditional values and give all employees Sundays off. Many woke millennials boycott those delicious chicken sammies over Chick-Fil-A's record on LGBT issues, prompting an apparent change to company policy. Amid the cultural proxy-war, sales doubled.

All those choices are valid. And they're valid because we honor our own values by putting our own money into the things we care about.

The Political Power of the Purse

This kind of conscious consumption is privilege by definition—it requires financial security to reject the most affordable version of just about everything.

It's also not clear whether eco-friendly marketing hype corresponds to real change or just attempts to woo customers with green-washing. Even when we're deliberate about our buying choices, it's difficult to know if we are making a meaningful difference or not.

We love our smartphones, even though making them requires mining rare minerals and every upgrade creates toxic e-waste. We increasingly prioritize travel and special events, despite the high carbon emissions from planes.

Young people rewarded Nike with a \$6 billion boost in brand value for its support of the race-conscious Colin Kaepernick, forgetting temporarily the dire working conditions of other people of color in the Nike supply chain.

Vegan cosmetics replace animal-derived oils with palm oil, even though palm oil plantations are a leading cause of rainforest destruction. When consumer pressure encouraged brands to go "palm oil free," replacement oils proved even worse for the environment.

When we embrace the meatless burger as a victory over factory farming, we don't consider how much added land must be cleared to raise soybeans. We enthuse about "zero emission" electric cars, but fail to see the coal-burning power plant at the other end of our electricity grid. We agree to eschew plastic straws without calculating whether "strawless" lids actually use more plastic. We protest pipelines without considering how many tanker trucks must be added to move that fuel to heat homes. We decry fossil fuels as dirty or villainous, without appreciating their role in protecting forests which would otherwise be farmed or burned for fuel.

In short, the complexity of the modern market, with its unprecedented connectivity,

4 Social responsibility doesn't mean bullying people who have different beliefs or badgering them to make changes you think are necessary. It means using the impact you have on the world to promote change—and your spending habits are a huge source of local, vocal activism.

and shared prosperity, makes it challenging to understand the implications of our actions. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't try.

The Power of the Purse

Maybe there's no such thing as a perfectly pristine dollar made or spent. Our global supply chain system is so sprawling that we simply can't be sure that every worker is treated well, every environmental precaution taken.

When we go wrong is when we try to impose our values on other people, or when we demand to use other people's money to support what we value.

Our values are so individual that tasking someone else with defending them will always result in disappointment, whether that's Amazon or a government agency.

Social responsibility doesn't mean bullying people who have different beliefs or badgering them to make changes you think are necessary. It means using the impact you have on the world to promote change—and your spending habits are a huge source of local, vocal activism. **B**

Source: fee.org /

WWW.

<http://www.b360nepal.com/>

“Proper functioning public transportation indicates two things: social equity and efficiency.”

BHUSHAN TULADHAR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
SAJHA YATAYAT AND
ENVIRONMENTAL EXPERT



Bhushan Tuladhar is an environmental engineer and the Executive Director of Sajha Yatayat, a public transport cooperative organisation operating buses in and around Kathmandu. He obtained his BS and MEng degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering from Cornell University. “I chose environmental engineering because I was drawn more to the human side or social science as it is about dealing with people and nature. When I got into it, I started to enjoy everything about it and I felt there is a need for more people in this sector,” says Tuladhar. Before that, he did his IB in Liberal Arts from

United World College of the American West. Tuladhar came back to Nepal in 1993 but his decision to return met with a lot of raised eyebrows. “If I had stayed in the US, I would have done well there, but I have no regrets coming back. I felt that there is more need and opportunity to display my work here in Nepal,” he states.

In the initial days after his return to Nepal, he struggled a bit until he got into International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). “During my tenure with IUCN, we worked closely with National Planning Commission (NPC) so it was great to be working with the government while being

a part of an international organisation,” he shares.

In 1998, Tuladhar got a call from Keshav Sthapit who had just been elected the Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City. Sthapit asked Tuladhar to work for him as his advisor. “While working for Keshav Sthapit, we asked him to form an environment department which I headed for awhile,” he recalls. Tuladhar was also member of City Planning Commission, a professional body working on long term planning keeping view of the environmental aspects. “Working in KMC and City Planning Commission gave me a reality check and I realised that such are the workplaces

where policies meet people.”

Tuladhar then joined Clean Energy Nepal, an NGO, as the Executive Director. Later, he worked for UN-Habitat as Chief Technical Advisor for South Asia. He is still the Chairperson of Environment and Public Health Organisation and Clean Energy Nepal, as well as an adviser to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

In an interview with **Dibesh Dangol** of **B360**, Tuladhar talked about the pending 300 electric buses, having a single public transport management organisation for every city, and measures for sustainable urban planning. **Excerpts:**

Failure to deliver proper public transportation has led to public angst and increase in the use of private vehicles despite how expensive it can be. What is Sajha Yatayat doing to address this?

The main emphasis of Sajha Yatayat has been to improve the service quality so that people would prefer to commute by public vehicles rather than own a private vehicle. This should be the emphasis of other companies involved in public transportation too. The factors to be considered to improve and provide quality services are the hardware and software of public vehicle operating business. Hardware means the buses whereas software includes discipline and behaviour of drivers and conductors, installing new technical features such as easy payment options and providing easy access to all types of passengers. Even though we have been improving such factors, we have realised that whatever we have been doing isn't enough and there is still a lot to do. Support of the government is also required to solve this matter. If the government gives public vehicles dedicated road space, like a lane or two, the buses will become more efficient. Then people will realise the efficiency of public transportation which might make them prefer public transportation. To regain public trust is all about offering services that meet their aspirations and creating a positive image of public transportation. Currently, in Nepal, people consider public transport for poor and blue-collar people only. Such mindset needs to change and people need to realise the necessity and importance of public transportation.

Sajha Yatayat is targeting to offer good quality electric buses featuring air conditioners and air suspensions soon. If you can enhance the experience and the image of public transport as a whole, it will create a positive impact. Public transportation system is about road networks also. To make a proper road network, we need the help

of the government. There are many other players in the market and everybody should be connected while holding such discussions to provide effective and efficient services.

Two things can be done by the local government: regulate and invest in public transportation. Before, the local governments were reluctant to invest in public transportation. But now, along with Kathmandu and Lalitpur municipalities, others have also started to invest in Sajha Yatayat. Through such investments, we have been able to purchase our fleets. This is also encouraging for other public transport operators. If we hadn't got the investment, we would have been shackled to compromise on the services. In terms of regulating public transportation, Kathmandu Metropolitan City came up with Transportation Act of its own which they are regulating but haven't been able to implement effectively since there are a lot of players in this market. There is no proper clarity in terms of who is responsible to manage public transportation. So, if the local, provincial or central governments clarify such issues, it would be great and we, as in public transportation companies, can work with that particular agency or institution. Sajha Yatayat hasn't got a lot of opportunities to work with privately owned public transportation companies, but some of them have bought and are operating big buses like Sajha Yatayat which is great to see.

What importance does public transportation play in the development of a city or country?

It plays a huge role. Proper functioning public transportation indicates two things: social equity and efficiency. Social equity means putting everybody on the same board. The streets and roads are for everybody and not just fancy cars or private vehicles. People from all backgrounds should be using public transportation. The former Mayor of Bogota, Enrique Penalosa once said,

"An advanced city is not a place where the poor move about in cars, rather it's where even the rich use public transportation." It means that if we can get rich people to commute in public transportation, it is an indicator of social equity.

Secondly, public transportation is a country's efficiency indicator. Most of the cars plying on the roads of Nepal have utmost 2-3 people and there are also many motorcycles with single riders, whereas 40-50 people can commute in a bus. The road space that private vehicles are currently taking is massive resulting in traffic congestion. The priority of every citizen should be to use road space efficiently, especially in a city like Kathmandu where there are limited spaces. It is also related to using vehicles efficiently. In a day, private vehicles are being used just for two hours on average. For two hours they are on the road providing service but for 22 hours it is occupying a public space i.e. parking lot, whereas buses operate 12-13 hours a day and are constantly on the move. People can get value for money in public transportation. If a city or a country has an efficient public transportation system, it contributes towards the economy and also the environment. Comparing to the per capita emission between a car or a motorcycle carrying two people and a bus carrying 40 people, a car or a motorcycle might emit less harmful emission than a bus individually. But, when calculated on a macro scale, the bus is more efficient from a social, economic and environmental perspective.

I don't expect people to realise this because people have always prioritised their convenience first and have dramatically shifted to private vehicles. This has happened because concerned people, companies and government institutions involved in the public transportation sector haven't been able to serve well and provide quality service. Public transportation is not a

preferred option for everybody because of its tarnished image. Moreover, people have perceived private vehicles as status symbol. This perception needs to be changed. So, it is up to the government and society to bring up the image of public transportation, make it attractive and convenient for people.

Can you give us an update on the pending 300 electric buses?

The cabinet hasn't rejected the project completely, but it has been on hold for more than two months and the work we had previously done is at standstill. We had completed pre-feasibility study, sold our shares to the government to allocate Rs 3 billion for 300 electric buses, formed a committee with representatives from Ministry of Physical Planning and Transport, Department of Transport Management, Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Nepal Electricity Authority, Sajha Yatayat and independent experts, and prepared a draft of specification document. We had already prepared to hold a board meeting to discuss the draft of the specification document, but a day before the meeting we got a letter from the government to halt the process.

We haven't received the exact reason why the project has been halted although the government has said it in the media that the halt is because of the delay in project and changes made in the specification document provided by the government... which I don't believe. If there was a delay, instead of halting the project, the government should have ordered us to speed up the processes of the project. Regarding changes made in the specification document, the initial documentation provided to us by the government was just a page and a half long and in the footnote, it was mentioned that it is just a framework. So, the document didn't exactly specify anything to us which is why we took and made the document a base upon which we built and

tweaked it a bit to create an improved version of the project. If you take that specification document to any technical expert, you'll be told that such information isn't enough. Though the government has said that the document isn't correct, it should give us solutions rather than pointing fingers. We would appreciate if the government called us for a meeting and share the solution. We haven't even shown our specification document to the government formally. That's why we were about to call a board meeting so that we could discuss it. Without even looking at it, they said it's not good. Even the representatives from the Ministry and Department of Transport who were in the committee weren't consulted before taking such rash decision by the government which was a surprise for all of us. The longer the process is stopped, the longer the delay. The momentum has been broken within us too because the people involved in this project, who had been working for almost a month, haven't met for more than two months now. More importantly, we need clear instructions from the government regarding the specifications of the buses that they want.

We have no idea when the process will resume and the buses will arrive. We have written to the government twice already and made daily phone calls but have got no response. We'll have to wait and see. Our objective was to get the electric buses within this year but it will not be happening.

Few public transport management organisations have imbibed EV buses into their arsenal. How important is it for other transport management organisations to also have EV buses for cleaner cities in Nepal?

It's very important. Sajha Yatayat alone cannot do it. But the others aren't ready because they cannot afford electric buses right now. The government should come up with a financing

system if it wants the country to imbibe electric vehicles. For example, everyone who uses petroleum pays Rs 0.50 per litre as pollution tax. In a year, more than a billion rupees are collected via this. If the government utilises that money, or a part of it, and says that it has a scheme in which any private sector wanting to invest in electric public buses are welcome, should meet such standards and will be provided with a subsidy, then suddenly operating electric buses becomes a viable business. Though the government has given tax subsidies for electric vehicles in Nepal, the financing subsidy will provide the added boost needed to fast-track public vehicles going electric.

Going electric has economic benefits also. The main deficit of our economy is led by petroleum import. If we can cut off that deficit by using electricity and electric products, which I think we have in abundance now, our economy will improve. If we don't utilise our electricity properly, it will go to waste. Our electricity comes from the rivers and we can't shut it off. Particularly, we have to use night-time electricity because the maximum amount of electricity goes to waste during night time. The best way to use it is through batteries. Batteries can be used to store electricity during the night and used during the day. So, from energy, economic, environment and social points of view, embedding electric vehicles and products have become important now more than ever before.

Constitutionally, provincial government along with local government should take charge of transport management. We have been working with Province 3 government, Kathmandu Metropolitan City and Lalitpur Metropolitan City, but for our electric buses project they haven't been involved at all. So, the central government either needs to stay away from it and delegate responsibilities to provincial or

local governments or should fast-track the process. It's an unnecessary obstruction that's been happening but it shouldn't be happening regardless who is in charge of the project. Politics and development should never intertwine.

What are your thoughts on having a single public transport management organisation in every local government?

There are two ways to look at this. Firstly, there is a need for a single transport regulatory authority which determines the routes and regulates public transportation companies. We do have a transport management department but it is majorly active in publishing driving license and collecting vehicle taxes only. Dedicated public transport authority should be created to make detailed planning about the number of public buses required in every city and its routes. It should also be responsible for inviting the private sector to compete in providing services; not compete amongst themselves within a route, but compete for the route. For example: If they publish a notice regarding the need for 60 buses for Lagankhel to Budanilkantha route with such standards and at such prices, the private sector can openly come and bid for the route. If this is done, the government doesn't need to provide the service by themselves and own the buses. In this way, the government will also get the private sector engaged in public transportation.

Secondly, the government can provide subsidy to public vehicle operators. In many foreign countries, the government provides a certain amount to public transport operating companies on certain kilometres so that the private sector doesn't have to depend on what they collect from the passengers solely. That's why they don't even wait for passengers. This system will also assist in reducing traffic congestion and accidents,

and increase public transport efficiency.

Is making a city 'Smart' all about installing smart technologies like parking, toilets and dustbins, or a mission which involves total urban planning and public awareness including environmental aspects? And do we have the resources to accomplish this?

There is a lot of debate on the concept of Smart City. People associate smart city with abundant use of technologies, which isn't true. It's more about using both techniques and technologies for efficient management of basic urban services like transportation, water, garbage, etc. Overall, the city should be efficient, meaning the output should be more than the input. The inputs can be capital, human force, resources, energy, etc and the output means the results. If people can grow more amounts of flowers using less amount of water, it is smart.

Similarly, the transportation system of any city needs to be made efficient so that it serves and benefits all citizens. In a city, you need a multi-model system in transportation. Some people need to ride bicycles, buses and private vehicles. A Smart City needs to be designed in such a way that each of these modes has a designated space to operate. People can choose the modes they want but the overall efficient modes should be prioritised like walking, cycling, etc, and there should be seamless transition amongst the modes. Using technology to make life convenient and city efficient is just an example of a Smart City, but we shouldn't only depend on technology because technology can also become a barrier. The real meaning of a Smart City is integrating and managing the available resources with all aspects of city life. Making a city green isn't similar to making a city smart. Green city is more concentrated on the environmental aspect and efficient utilisation of resources. But a Smart City needs to be

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green as well because cities bring people together and it's where interactions happen.

We do have the resources to make our populated cities Smart Cities. Creating a smart city is all about planning and utilising the available resources properly and efficiently rather than making sudden drastic changes. The local, provincial and central governments should know these formulae and work on it by making long term urban planning projects mainly prioritising basic urban services like water, garbage and transportation. For a city to be smart, the general public needs to be smart!

In your past interviews, you have talked about the structural integrities that cities of Nepal used to have in the past, positive effects and importance of such structures, and how unplanned and rapid urbanisation destroyed the traditional system of water, land and resource management. Is it too late for Nepal to mend past mistakes?

I don't think it's too late and there is still a lot that can be done. Kathmandu was

considered one of the best-planned cities of the world before rapid urbanisation hit Kathmandu and changed the landscape of the city drastically. Kathmandu was planned and designed in such a way that it was considered a Smart City until a few decades ago. The previous generation of people living in Kathmandu realised the limitation of resources and designed the city to maximise but preserve those resources. We don't have to exactly go back to the structure that was 50 years ago, but the main thing is to understand the values and fuse those values with modern technologies. Fifty years ago, in 1969, when Kathmandu's first urban planning was made, it was written that vehicles should be limited in the core city area of Kathmandu. Fifty years ago that was said and people didn't follow which has caused drastic traffic congestions inside the core city area. We can still mend that mistake although a lot has been lost. One easy solution can be limiting vehicle entrances in such areas and running electric rickshaws.

In the book 'The Newars', which was written 50 years ago by Gopal Singh Nepali, it's mentioned that Newars used to sell their waste for 50 paisa per tin box. What can we understand from this is that the people back then knew that waste had value, waste can be recycled and the person who generated the waste themselves took responsibility for waste management. I am not saying that we need to go back to that system completely, but we need to understand the principle values of waste management; waste has a value, can be recycled and people themselves should be responsible for their waste. If we completely forget these values, there is no way we can manage the waste, garbage and drainage problems that we are currently facing.

We need a modern system which follows these principles and methods. The Ministry of Urban Planning along with local governments should consider these principles and methods and make a modern system for proper and sustainable urban planning.

You have been advocating for clean mobility which includes the need for zero pollution vehicles, cycling lanes, road-side tree plantation, public transportation, promoting walking and conducting regular environment awareness campaigns. Do you think your voice is reaching the government?

It has been heard partially. The government has invested three billion rupees for electric buses, which I think is because of my advocacy. Recently, news regarding making the core city area of Kathmandu vehicle free/limited zone has also emerged which is great. It hasn't happened exactly the way and in the rate I prefer, but we are slowly getting there. It is a long term process because people's mindset and attitude should change. It's almost like swimming upstream. So yes, there have been changes but it isn't enough and a lot needs to be done. **B**



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STRATEGY BEHIND THE LATHER

Text by - Avant Shrestha and Ankita Jain

Out of all the 'Made in Nepal' products, natural and organic soap bars are gaining attention in local and international markets. And the competition is such that every other day, a new brand is born. One of the oldest in the market is Wild Earth. Commercially registered in 1990, the brand

started transactions in 1998 as a manufacturer and supplier. It was started by an American Medical Anthropologist who visited Nepal for a project and ended up establishing her venture in natural soap bar and skincare products. Being in the industry for more than 25 years, Wild Earth sets an example for every new comer. With over

300 plus products, it has soap bars for every age group from a newborn baby to a senior citizen. Further, they also recently introduced soap bars for pets which isn't clinically approved but they claim the ingredients used are natural and pet-friendly. Wild Earth majorly sources ingredients from all across Nepal and then

the soap bar is handcrafted by its 'all women team'.

Koseli is another company dealing in natural soap bars under foreign direct investment business model. Koseli, meaning 'gift' in Nepali, was established in late 2015 and is an herbal product branch of Herb Nepal. Simone Alexander and Benjamin van Ooij, the

two Directors of Herb Nepal, call these products a gift from farmers across Nepal. The products have been made using organic herbs that have been grown, cultivated and processed by small-scale farmers in the country. They also use the herbs grown in their own farm which was established in late 2014 and is located in Bhaktapur. Herb Nepal is a social, creative and innovative organic farm and training centre. Here, farmers are regularly trained in organic, sustainable land-use and herbal processing. Though the herbs used in the Koseli soap bars are grown using organic farming principles, the brand is not certified as organic. "The certification comes with an additional cost of Rs 3-5 lakhs a year. Also, our consumers aren't ready to pay an extra amount for the organic stamp. Hence, we are labelled natural," shares Ooij. Alexander and Ooij have been in the country for the past eight years. While Ooij, a Dutch, landed in Nepal for an eco-village project; Alexander, his partner and wife, used to work for a charity organisation in the UK. Koseli earns the trust of its buyers through its feel good story and the fact that the ingredients used are traceable to its farm. From beard to hair conditioning soap bars, Koseli deals in seven unique varieties.

Luniva Soap Industries is a six-year-old company specialising in organic soaps; surf and other house hold products like toilet cleaners, glass cleaners and dishwashers. Her father initially started the company and Sushmita Manandhar later joined the family business. Luniva consists of a wide variety of organic soaps but are primarily focused on soaps that are ideally for people suffering from dry and itchy skin. Manandhar expresses, "90% of our ingredients and raw materials are sourced in Nepal and the rest from abroad. Luniva generally produces their soaps in small batches to perfect their recipe and consequently their products. Some may consider



"Not every soap bar claiming to be made with only Nepali ingredients is authentic. When you read the ingredients used, there is the mention of several essential oils which aren't available in the country."
Rabi Kandel
 Head of Operations, Wild Earth.

us expensive but we believe that price is justified by the quality of our products. Luniva has received positive feedbacks in the market".

Manandhar claims, "we have lots of return customers and based on the response we are happy to claim that the sales are positive." They do not have a specific target market but claim that anyone suffering from dry skin would have positive effect if they use their products. In the future they are trying to enter the pharmaceutical market as their products would be ideal in that segment.

Saloni Rajbhandari started Laali initially as a hobby, and after receiving positive feedback in the market decided to start her own skin essential business in 2015. Laali Natural is a brand with an array of products like natural soaps, body butter, shampoo bars, lip balm and face scrubs. Laali's ingredients consist of factors like oil and herbs added with fragrances which are good for the body. For a new comer in the market, Laali has a loyal customer base. However Rajbhandari explains, "There is a big struggle for small scale or artisanal soap makers like me to compete against those who manufacture on larger scales."



"People aren't aware that there are certain chemicals used in natural soap as well. So to claim it completely chemical free would be unethical. Rather informing people that no harmful chemicals are used in the making would be appropriate."
Simone Alexander
 Directors of Herb Nepal

Process

Natural soap is a compound made of natural oils or fats with sodium hydroxide or any other strong alkali (known as lye). "People aren't aware that there are certain chemicals used in natural soap as well. So to claim it completely chemical free would be unethical. Rather informing people that no harmful chemicals are used in the making would be appropriate," states Alexander.

The harmful chemicals like parabens and lathering agents like Sodium Lauryl Sulphate are avoided in the making of a natural soap bar. Wild Earth uses natural preservatives like Vitamin E, citric acid and others which preserve the quality of the product and extends its life. "No harmful chemicals are used in the process," assures Rabi Kandel, Head of Operations, Wild Earth.

The market here has natural soaps made from two different methods: the melt-and-pour and cold-press. Melt-and-pour is better suited for quick orders because the base ingredients like aloe vera or goat milk are available online from certified dealers. "You just melt that base, put in an additive, such as neem, honey or essential oils and set it. The soaps will be ready in three-four hours in the mould," says Manandhar. While cold-pressed soaps take



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Benjamin van Ooij
 Directors of Herb Nepal

a month to cure but you have full control over the oils which makes it ideal for people with skin problems like acne or eczema. "Cold-pressing also allows the addition of fresh fruit pulp or any other ingredients, even though the soap takes 24 hours to set, and a further four weeks for the lye to evaporate," says Kandel. Further cold pressing increases the shelf life of the natural soap, agrees both Kandel and Alexander. The shelf life of Wild Earth and Koseli soap bars are more than two years whereas Luniva and Laali soap bars last for a few months to a year.

Price & Packaging

The challenge is that a bar of hand-made soap costs more than the factory-produced one. "I know it pinches the consumers' pocket, so we have priced the products between Rs. 127 and Rs. 550 a bar," informs Kandel. On the other hand, Koseli is one of the most expensive natural soaps in the market with the starting price at Rs 500 and targets people in their 30s. "We strategically are less available in the local market because of the pricing. We do not want to compete over pricing. However, the feel good story of the brand helps in growing our clientele," claims Ooij. Koseli's profit margin varies between 10-40% depending upon the clientele and quantity.

The price of the soap bar also depends upon the ingredients used. If the brand uses essential oils which are imported then the price automatically rises. "Not every soap bar claiming to be made with only Nepali ingredients is authentic. When you read the ingredients used, there is the mention of several essential oils which aren't available in the country," claims Kandel.

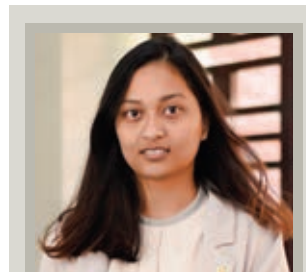
While Wild Earth is moving from plastic to biodegradable paper for packaging, Koseli uses paper since its inception. "We turned business as a model to serve back to the community and created a cycle which is sustainable," says Alexander.

Market Strategies & Challenges

Wild Earth being one of the oldest in the market enjoys a bigger market share. "Every month we sell around 50,000 soap bars," says Kandel. Wild Earth was also one of the suppliers of Body Shop UK and currently exports to European countries, China, Middle East and America. On the other hand Koseli is available at Timro Concept Store and a few other outlets in the capital. "The market size is small here. Hence, we are more focused on the international market. Currently, we are directly supplying to 26 stores in the Netherlands and are keen to tap into the European market as well," shares Ooj. Both brands agree that the local market has a lot of potential with the

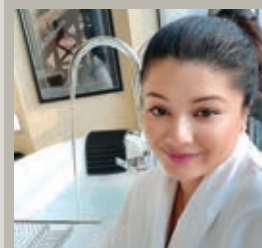
success of farmer's market and awareness about 'Made in Nepal' products but the export volume is larger. "The brand value of Nepali products is much more than the products available in the neighbouring countries. There is a demand for Himalayan products in the international market," adds Ooj. He says competing over price factor with the neighbouring countries would be silly as they have cheaper labour, availability of all the raw materials required and hence a cheaper price tag.

Additional challenges for the locally manufactured soaps is the price factor and the fact that people are hesitant to trust organic soaps. Lack and proper information and false marketing can be attributed to this problem. Rajbhandari claims that it is very difficult to compete with the larger manufactures, instead the local artisanal soap makers are more focused in their own niche market. "The price factor always arises; simply put organic and natural soaps are not affordable. Our products are comparatively more expensive because of the ingredients we use but in hindsight they have various benefits as well. Manandhar claims, "The market prefers mass produced foreign soaps as to the organic and natural ones made in Nepal. But once a consumer uses the soap, it is easy to gain their trust."



"We have lots of return customers and based on the response we are happy to claim that the sales are positive."

Sushmita Manandhar
Founder of Luniva Soap Industries



"There is a big struggle for small scale or artisanal soap makers like me to compete against those who manufacture on larger scale."

Saloni Rajbhandari
Founder of Laali

Niche Marketing

During a meeting with hotel giants, Alexander was told that they would prefer an internationally recognised brand rather than opting for a Nepali brand. Talking in terms of pricing as well, it is difficult for any hospitality chain to shift from mere Rs 9 to Rs 150 a soap bar, informs Alexander. She further adds, "Rather than buying these products from neighbouring countries and bringing in carbon emission, hotels can consider buying a local product and sustain the farmers."

Today hotels use the placements of homegrown brands to identify oneself as authentic Nepali, sustainable, eco-friendly and more. "It acts as a marketing tool these days which is a win-win for both the parties," says Ooj. Presence in hotels and resorts help in growing clientele.

Koseli soap bars are present in hotels like Yak & Yeti, 3 rooms by Pauline, Cosy Nepal, Barahi Jungle Lodge Chitwan and more. Similarly, Wild Earth products are present in Hyatt, Dahlia Boutique Hotel Pokhara, Ayatana Spa in Hotel Shambala, etc. Earlier, Wild Earth was also present in Shangri La chain of hotels worldwide.

Future

The natural soap companies are gradually expanding towards complete skincare products and essential

oils. "The demand for essential oils in the international market is huge," says Alexander. Koseli is planning to limit the soap varieties to seven and start manufacturing essential oils. Alexander and Ooj are further planning to build a factory in their farm which will only concentrate on manufacturing various essential oils. On the other hand, Wild Earth already sells 50-60 varieties of essential oil out of which 25 are sourced locally and the rest are imported from India. The brand is currently working to grow its digital presence, local market share and eco-friendly packaging.

As for the future of the industry, a proper monitoring system is vitally needed for better regulation and for consumers to build trust on organic and natural soap manufacturers in the country. Basically, the companies that manufacture soaps have to be classified in the fast moving consumer goods (FMCGs) sector. However, the monitoring system is very minimal and not very strict. "There is a governmental agency that monitors these aspects but the only classification quote is that the soaps need to have PH8, which is a natural alkaline in them," explains Manandhar.

All in all, the natural and organic soap industry is gradually expanding as both local and international demand continues to rise. **B**



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“It is only when the country is prosperous that its citizens command respect and prestige in the international arena.”



KUMAR PANTA

PRESIDENT, NON-RESIDENT NEPALI ASSOCIATION (NRNA)

Kumar Panta is the newly elected President of Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA). Born in Phujel of Gorkha district, he lives in Germany and is an entrepreneur. Panta was the Vice-President of the organisation for the past two terms and is now leading NRNA for the next two years after he won the elections in October this year.

Dibesh Dangol of B360 interviewed Panta regarding his agenda as President of NRNA, plans to integrate and unite the global Nepali diaspora, and issues regarding dual citizenship. **Excerpts:**

What is your agenda as the newly appointed President of NRNA?

NRNA, since its very inception, has been involved in protecting and promoting the rights of non-resident Nepalis and mobilising the NRN resource, whether it is their financial resources or knowledge, skill or networks they have developed outside of Nepal in the interest of the country and the people. I believe in continuity and my agendas are also a continuation of the past agenda. Having said this, I would like to highlight that during the election campaign I had emphasised on making the much talked about Rs 10 billion investment fund happen and reform our entire organisational setup and processes so that we can be smarter and modern. The issue of linking Nepal with the diaspora knowledge pool and enlarging the knowledge and skill levels of the Nepali people is our prime agenda. We will complete the ongoing initiatives

and projects and focus more on doing sustainable things.

How is your leadership planning to assist Nepal government with Visit Nepal 2020 tourism campaign and attracting FDI in Nepal?

Promoting Nepal as a major tourist destination in the world will be one area we will be working with vigour. We have already signed an MOU with the government. We will be working with the government to organise promotional activities. NRNA has initiated campaigns like send three friends home. We have been organising Nepal festivals in various countries. NRNA has its network in more countries than the residential missions of the government. We are and will be working with the government to popularise Nepal, Nepali culture and heritage.

Visiting friends and relatives are a growing segment in the global tourism flow. There are NRNs in an increasing number around the globe. Through our network, we are encouraging people to come back to Nepal for holidays.

We will be using Nepali owned and involved businesses very extensively in promoting Nepal as a tourist destination. There are so many Nepali owned restaurants and stores around the globe. The tourism promotion in my view is a win-win proposition for the NRN community.

What are your plans for integrating and uniting the global Nepali diaspora?

The global Nepali diaspora is as diverse as the Nepali population itself. The issues and concerns of the diaspora may be diverse and different and we may represent different strata of the Nepali population, but one thing unites all of us and that is the love for the motherland and the eagerness to see Nepal prosper. It is only when the country is prosperous that its citizens command respect and prestige in the international arena.

Our efforts will be to make foreign employment more secure and trustworthy for those going for foreign employment. We are also increasing our efforts and ability to serve those in distress during foreign employment.

As of today, for many Nepali youths, foreign employment is a compulsion because there is little scope to find good-paying jobs in Nepal. We aim to make it a matter of choice rather than compulsion. Then channelling the earnings of foreign employment to investment rather than consumption is a challenge for everybody. We will be establishing an investment fund with a corpus of Rs 10 billion. There will be a special window for investment by persons in foreign employment.

We are working with the government on framing a law providing legal status for NRNs. The law will define what the NRNs can and cannot do.

Are you aware of the 'Desh Farkam Abhiyan'? What are your views?

Our goal is to see Nepal prosper. In my view, the diaspora can contribute in many ways. It is not required for everybody to return home. For example, if as a tour operator located outside of Nepal, I am bringing many tourists, I may be able to contribute more by being located outside of Nepal rather than by coming back and competing for jobs here. Having said this, the people who have acquired knowledge and skills needed for Nepal and have resources should be encouraged to come back and contribute to the motherland. In short, it should be a choice for every individual. We are in a global world which is why we should not remain in cocoons.

What is the status of dual citizenship that NRNA has been lobbying for?

Immediately after the election, I had the opportunity to meet our leaders including the Chairperson of the Governance and State Management Committee.

We are concerned about the delay. We have been given to understand that there is agreement on the provision regarding NRN citizenship as provisioned in the Constitution of Nepal. But there are differences among political parties on the issue of providing citizenship to foreign spouses of Nepali citizenship. We are hopeful that the issue will be resolved and the citizenship amendment will be dealt with in the upcoming parliament session.

NRN Infrastructure and Development is presently involved in four hydropower projects; is it associated with NRNA?

NRN Infrastructure and Development is an investment company promoted by NRN friends. NRNA is a not-for-profit institution and is not involved in the company. However, many NRN friends including those in the leadership of NRNA are involved in this company. This company is a business entity and runs as per the company law. Our role is limited to encouraging and supporting such companies; after all, one of the objectives of NRNA is to promote NRN investment in Nepal. We believe that we need to bring together scattered resources to execute large scale projects.

There is widely shared belief that NRNA makes loud promises but it doesn't translate into contribution for the country. Your views.

I know about the criticism. In Nepal, we seem to expect too much. At the same time, individuals don't care about what they have assured and what they have delivered. We need to develop the habit of being realistic and truthful. About NRN's contribution, my conclusion is that they have done a lot, but there is scope to increase that by many folds. We need a proper mapping of the contribution and assessment

of potential. Of course, there may have been instances of individuals claiming that they will deliver the sky. The past has taught us many valuable lessons. We need to develop a mechanism of celebrating success. We should not be euphoric about NRNA. It cannot solve all problems or ills of Nepal. Nor should we be apologetic that we have not done anything.

News regarding internal conflicts and NRNA turning into a political body keep surfacing. NRNA Founding President Dr Upendra Mahato also boycotted this year's NRNA conference citing increasing politics in the association. Your comments

You are probably talking about the scene seen during the election. NRNA as an institution is apolitical. NRNs as individuals may be politicised. They may have ideologies and leanings. I for one have never emphasised my ideology or political leaning or preferences. Politicisation is a two-way process. When individuals in the association are willing to use the influence of the political parties and the political parties are willing to advocate or put their entire weight on someone, then the problem arises.

In Nepal, the parties and especially their sister organisations seem to look at issues from a binary angle. For them, it is victory at any cost. So, a great part of the blame for the election campaign on political or ideological lines goes to the parties themselves. We should be ready to see apolitical institutions. But to be honest, if you look at the results or outcome of our election, there is enough evidence to see that NRNs are not divided into political lines. This is very reassuring. **B**

“Impact week contributes towards promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in emerging economies like Nepal as the basis for sustainable growth. With the help of the design thinking method, local students and young professionals are empowered to develop business ideas of their own and solutions to solve problems in their local or wider community.”

Michael Koegel is involved with Impact Week as a Design Thinking Lead Coach and Organiser. Impact Week helps students in emerging economies see the challenges in their environment as entrepreneurship opportunities. He was previously at SAP AppHaus as a Design Strategist for 16 years driving human-centred digital transformation projects through co-innovation and design thinking. Currently, he is an independent consultant helping corporations design strategies through human-centred digital transformation via innovation and design thinking process.

Dibesh Dangol interviewed Michael Koegel during his visit to Kathmandu for Impact Week Nepal 2019 and Nepal Communitere's event to know more about the Impact Week programmes, the concept and process of design thinking, and the sectors in Nepal he thinks have entrepreneurial opportunities.

Excerpts



Michael Koegel

Design Thinking Lead Coach and Organiser, Impact Week

What's the main motive behind holding Impact Week programmes? How is it different from other incubation programmes?

The main motive that started from the founders five years ago was to give back what he learned in terms of entrepreneurship and design thinking to the youth and countries which have high rate of youth unemployment and show them that they can see opportunities in the challenges they see in their countries and communities as a way to create change and also as a way to create businesses that can create more jobs for youths along with creating change in the society.

Impact week contributes towards promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in emerging economies like Nepal as the basis for sustainable growth. With the help of the design thinking method, local students and young professionals are empowered to develop business ideas of their own and solutions to solve problems in their local or wider community. Impact Week basically spreads through personal connections. The more Impact Weeks we do, the more people invite us through connections and we come to their universities. For Nepal, it started with Aman Bhattarai who is working for zeroG – a Lufthansa Group company – as Senior Consultant and is originally from Kathmandu, and Tilo Hillmer who I met during the first Impact Week held in Kenya. Tilo came with the idea to hold an Impact Week in Nepal and Aman created the network with King's College and other sponsors. It took almost a year to adapt the whole programme here and finally we did it. It was lot of fun.

I consider the intercultural and intercompany aspect that we bring in like junior coaches from around the world and the other half of the people we are training from the company such as faculty or NGO members different from other programmes. They work together as an international

team creating new actions and networks which helps us with funding of the overall programme. The real difference however is that Impact Week programmes are totally non-profit. So, we don't have an incubator that invests in start-ups and we get money from. It's totally voluntary work. Our expectation is that within three years these countries will be able to run the programme by themselves. For the first three years, we run the programme. We get hold of local junior coaches and train them in the second year along with local organisation team taking more of the work already. We train another batch of local people and bring less from the international side in the third year. And from the third year, the branch of organisation in the country should be running the programmes by themselves. We have seen that process working very well in Africa.

During your visit to Nepal, what opportunities have you seen in Nepal's economy and would suggest to students and young entrepreneurs?

We from Impact Week don't directly suggest the challenges that the students work on. We always identify it together with our local university and NGO partners because they are the people of the country and they know best what the country needs. We only bring in our method, design and teaching knowledge and we define the content together with our local partners which is lead by them.

Agricultural sector is a potential sector and there is a huge opportunity for youths to fill the void in this sector because there are only few farmers. There are also opportunities in the industrial and mobility sector and I think a lot of changes can be brought into these sectors in Nepal.

What are the pressing local and national level challenges Impact Week has found in Nepal?

Being able to grow Nepal's economy by using the national manpower is one pressing challenge I have found in

Nepal because a lot of youth are going to foreign countries. So the country's government need to find ways to stop this brain-drain by providing them opportunities to innovate and work in Nepal itself.

In design thinking process, we see the challenges from a very broad perspective and we ask the students to really go out and talk to the people on the streets that are really affected by those problems. After that, they come up with many different solutions, choose the suitable one, build a prototype and go back to the streets to test if people prefer their idea/solution. We believe in working together with the people to define and solve the problem. This process can also be used by the government to identify and solve problems the people are facing in the country.

Globally what are today's start-ups doing right and what are the elements they are getting wrong?

Lots of start-ups are always striving to be the next unicorn. It's all about growth and money. What we try to do differently is that we are taking a sustainable and community thinking process. Not every start-up needs to create thousands of jobs and make billions of dollars. Creating many small start-ups that have a base to survive and create a change is also valuable. If the company grows, a lot of the money goes to investor pockets because the company is dependent on the money taken from the investors. So, if the start-ups stay smaller and connected to the community, you'll also look more independent.

What is your definition of design thinking?

My definition of design thinking is based mainly on the mindset of bringing people together from different backgrounds. Our student teams also come from different faculties. It's a process but also a way of working in a space where people can put a lot of ideas on the walls, work for extended hours, change on how they think and do more of

the work from the brain than hands. It's more about nurturing people regarding 'go ahead and do it' mindset.

I think the concept hasn't changed too much but it's also becoming more common in the corporate world. The trend I see is that design thinking is often considered as a quick fix which is not true. It's not only about one or two day workshops that will solve the problems. In the design thinking process, it is really about the hard-work that happens between the workshops. So, that's why we don't accept half-day workshops because they can only give you a glimpse of understanding the problem and that isn't enough time to deeply understand people's needs and define solutions. The four days that we give the students during Impact Week programmes is still very stressful for them, but it's a reasonable time for them to understand and develop an idea to solve the problem.

Technologically, nowadays people have more tools that can help them to operate online and design thinking is happening in remote teams as well. But, in the beginning, the team members need to be together in a room for a couple of days to build up personal relationship and create a common understanding about the project they are working on and only then they can work remotely. If they just work remotely, I don't believe that can be very effective.

What does the process of design thinking look like?

Design thinking process has six phases. It starts with understanding and bringing the team together so that they can share their knowledge on the problem they are tackling. The next phase is observing phase where the team members go out in the streets, talk to the people who are affected by the same problems and learn more about the problems. After observing is synthesis phase in which the team members again meet after public observation, share their knowledge and condense it to a problem



statement. Next phase is to ideate again and develop the solution because the problems the team members thought are the pressing ones might not be the same for the general public. They might find another pressing problem through which they can have an opportunity to change or modify their current idea to solve the problem. In the fifth phase, the team members make a prototype of their solution/idea. To see how they can actually implement their solution or how could they at least define the solution in a way so they can take it back to the users to get their feedbacks and check whether they are going on the right direction is the final or testing phase.

Impact Week isn't guiding start-ups per say. We are guiding students or young entrepreneurs to identify local problems and create solutions via starting a project or start-up.

For the guiding and developing part, we collaborate with local incubators and we only help the students to run through the whole design thinking process during Impact Week challenge programme. We also encourage students to use our funding for their idea to create a start-up team. But for further development, it's done with collaboration with local incubators. Sometimes, junior coaches who are very attached to their teams become their advisor. So, the guiding part happens locally.

Can design thinking and traditional quantitative market research co-exist?

Yes, of course because design thinking is used in very early phases of problem definition. If people or companies already have a clear definition or starting to identify the solution very

clearly, they want to go out and say how they can scale it, and where is the new market that they can possibly penetrate or which other types of users can we attract, then traditional quantitative market research also goes hand in hand with design thinking. Design thinking usually relies on quantitative researches in the earlier stages to identify the problem and storytelling because the team needs to know what questions they need to ask and observe people regarding the trends or problems to get an understanding about their agendas and direction.

How does design thinking co-exist with emerging innovation paradigms such as working directly with lead users and crowd-sourcing?

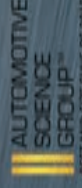
Both lead users and crowd-sourcing are involved in the design thinking process. When

team members are to go for surveys in the second phase of design thinking process, they'll already have an idea about whom they want to observe, interview or communicate with. So, if the team wants to communicate with a wider range of people regarding their product or solution, they can do it through crowd-sourcing which is an internet-enabled process, whereas lead users adapt or modify the product beyond its limits to meet their needs. This relates with the fourth phase of design thinking process only if the team members want lead users to help them ideate change or modify their own solution. **B**



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SUSTAINABLE FASHION

Text by Avant Shretha

The fashion industry is an unstoppable juggernaut when it comes to shelling out new products every season. The modern day trend of consumerism has ushered a term 'fast-fashion' that basically means an inexpensive method of producing apparels rapidly by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trends.

According to The Economist, 80 billion items of clothing are manufactured every year. Today, the global fashion market is estimated

to be \$1.34 Trillion a year industry which is about 2% of the world's GDP. Fast fashion has allowed consumers to buy more and at a cheaper rate, but in hindsight these clothes are being worn and used less often and are discarded at an alarming rate.

Nepal, a relatively small nation in the grand scale of the fashion industry is no different. Regardless of how the local garment industry performs, the nation doesn't lag behind when it comes to importing garments and adopting the

latest fashion trend in an attempt to mimic the runways of New York or Paris. As reported in a national daily, the garment industry and the boutique business is booming with customer attraction towards designer dresses and rise in the purchasing power. Additionally, Nepali customers have become more brand and fashion conscious due to which demand for designer wear - both local and international - has swelled. Evidently, such trends have become profitable for the industry but proven to

be very unsustainable for the environment.

Poor Fashion Choices

Activist, startups and companies have taken a stand for sustainable fashion to be fully embraced in the country. However, they have an uphill task as more and more generic and arguably counterfeited and inexpensive apparel enter our borders and into the thriving market place. As the spending capacity of the citizen increases so is the demand for imported western apparels. Eventually,

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as both the international and domestic fashion industry continues to gain momentum while racking in huge profits for the stakeholders, it is important to acknowledge that the fashion too comes with a hefty environmental cost.

Haushala Thapa, Co-Founder, Haushala Creatives explains, "Nepali fashion is growing very fast but at the same time we do not have the concept of fast fashion instead we want everything very fast. We are focused on following a trend and I think that is very scary in Nepal because when you're working with trends, we don't really know where our clothes are coming from and who are making them," she adds. There is a direct correlation between the Nepali garment industry and the fashion industry. In fact, Nepal imports textile from neighbouring countries such as India, China and Bangladesh as well as Thailand and Indonesia. As reported, in 2017, Nepal imported textiles and clothing worth \$ 391,498.35 from the world (US \$), with South Asia accounting to \$ 201,672.28. This huge textile imports are vitally necessary for the thriving market however, due to the lack of regulation regarding sustainable textiles, even low quality textiles is bound to get imported as well.

As mentioned, due to the exponential rise of the fast fashion industry; consumers today buy more clothes that are easily and readily available. What's even more alarming is how little thought goes behind how people easily discard them. Manish Thapa, Founder and the CEO of Antidote Nepal shares, "We grew up having this mentality of buying new clothes every time there is a special occasion. And I believe this is more evident today, in a cultural way and socio economic aspect as well. We cannot point a finger at anything at this moment, but this trend of over indulgence needs intervention," Manish adds. Additionally, the process of manufacturing new fabrics and clothes is harmful for the

environment and consequently these discarded clothes leave behind dire environmental implications as well. Lastly, cotton farmers and garment factory workers suffer various health issues, raising the questions about contentious human right practices." As a result, the fashion industry today is the second largest polluter in the world only behind the oil industry.

Cost of a T-Shirt

To simply lay it down, let us take the example of an average T-shirt and its environmental impact. Initially, cotton required to make a T-shirt requires more pesticides and insecticides than any other crops in the world. They also require lots of water to grow. In fact, cotton production is being blamed for depleting resources and contaminating the environment with pesticides. Secondly, chemical from clothes manufacturing plants have devastated rivers and water sources in Asia as the toxic dyes used for coloring pollutes surrounding rivers and waters sources. These pollutants can be carcinogenic and harmful to humans and damage surrounding ecosystems. And lastly, about 2700 liters of water is needed to produce an average T-shirt and it is estimated that the fashion industry is on the course to create a quarter of projected global carbon emissions by 2050. According to Carbon Trust, the estimated carbon footprint of a cotton T-shirt over its lifespan emits 15Kg of Co₂. That is a single t-shirt lifespan and it is nerve-wrecking to comprehend the amount of carbon footprints a small segment of the fashion industry is responsible for.

Understanding Sustainable Fashion

Sustainable fashion is an ideal of fostering change to fashion products (specifically to textiles in our context) towards a sustainable social practices and for environmental and ecological improvement. The idea behind sustainable fashion is to make products

that have high utility value and produce them with the least environmental cost. According to Haushala, "Sustainability is something that is 'long term' that should not be damaging to the earth and the people who wear them. If you can rebrand, reuse something that is sustainable."

Ayush from Antidote Nepal explains, "Fashion entails that you buy new clothes every time because clothes get old and wears off and you have to buy new ones. And to make new clothes requires a lot of resources which creates lots of pollution and requires lots of money. And these are the factors which in the near future might limit our over use of cloths. And through our research and efforts to mitigate over use of cloths we can call them sustainable fashion".

Solutions

One of the best methods local entrepreneurs and activist have utilised is the cloth swap event which undoubtedly is even one of the best ways to reduce textile waste. Additionally, there is a plethora of locally produced resources and methods that can be applied to create appealing solutions. While buying clothes, choose garments made from eco-friendly, natural fabrics such as bamboo, silk, organic cotton and hemp can be the right track towards sustainability.

As Haushala explains, "First take care of clothes that you already have. Second is repairing the things that you have. Third is reusing or recycling your clothes. I believe if we follow these methods then it could be an important step towards sustainable fashion. So if we are to bring forth a mass change we need to look at repairing, reusing, and taking care of your fabric," she stresses.

Manish theorises, "Maybe we can use the available resources in the form of clothes. We can reuse it multiple times and increase their lifespan. With this the demand for new clothes

decreases, the wastage of clothes gets reduced and we can minimise the requirement of scarce resources that are needed to make fabrics."

Manish claims, "In Nepal, clothes are so cheap and we generally lack the knowledge about climate change and the fashion industry's implication on it. I believe talking and raising awareness about sustainable fashion would be good but this has to start with changes in individual behaviour. Plus fashion is easy to show off and in a developing country like ours, when people's economic power increases, they have the desire to flex their purchasing power and hence fashion comes first."

Sustainable Fashion in Nepal

Haushala expresses, "It's very tricky in Nepal because we are a very small country and we are very easily influenced by modernisation and Western culture. It will take time but eventually people will realise and adopt a sustainable way of fashion if there's enough awareness."

In the long run sustainable fashion is the future. But as for the time being, it is important to open dialogues about the negative implication of the fashion industry and the benefits of sustainable fashion to the environmental and the individual.

Sustainable living is ingrained in our society. "Our ancestors have lived sustainable lives for a very long time; I think our generation will revitalise it," expresses Manish. The idea of implementing sustainable fashion in the market as well as our personal lives could be a slow process. It does not require taking radical approach and never buying new apparel or never changing outfits. It basically means being responsible for what you buy and what you discard. According to Ayush: moving towards sustainable fashion means giving more emphasis on quality rather than quantity. **B**



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“Because of the delay in construction of stadiums, sporting venues and training facilities, our athletes have especially lost the ‘home ground’ advantage.”

JEEVAN RAM SHRESTHA
PARLIAMENTARIAN & PRESIDENT OF NEPAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

Jeevan Ram Shrestha is the current elected President of Nepal Olympic Committee (NOC). He was re-elected to the post in mid-September. He is also the former Secretary General of the committee and has attended many international sporting events to learn and make plans on behalf of NOC. Further, he holds the position of Nepal Ski Association and Member Secretary of National Sports Council (NSC). He is also Member of the Parliamentary Committee of Youth, Sports, Education and Health.

As a politician, Jeevan Ram Shrestha is affiliated with Nepal Communist Party and is a Parliamentarian. He got involved in politics more than three decades ago as a student leader during college life at Saraswoti Campus, Lainchaur. Shrestha was also the Ward Chairperson of Kathmandu Municipality - 15. "I want to motivate people to follow in my footsteps and participate in social activities to create an impact in the society," he emphasises during an interview with **Dibesh Dangol** of **B360** regarding the South Asian Games 2019 (SAG) and pressing issues concerning sports and sports development in Nepal. Excerpts:

Can you update us on the management aspect of SAG 2019?

NOC has been affiliated with South Asia Olympic Council to make necessary policies for SAG. We are to supervise and coordinate with Olympic Committees of participating countries regarding the participating athletes and sports-related entourages, issue identity cards of participating athletes and entourage, and accredit them after the sporting event. The overall management of SAG 2019 including accommodation, diet, facilities and transportation are being looked after by a different management committees and sub-committees formed

by the Nepal Government and Ministry of Youths and Sports as per the Cabinet's decision. As far as I know, rebuilding, renovation and construction of stadiums and sports venues are nearly complete in both Kathmandu and Pokhara, and the SAG management committees and sub-committees have already decided and planned the overall aspects.

SAG was supposed to be held in March 2018 and has been postponed twice to now be held from December 1-10. What were the reasons for the delay and what can we learn from it?

When Nepal took the responsibility of hosting the next SAG on Feb 2016 after the closing ceremony of SAG 2016 held in India, Nepal was still suffering from political instability. Whatever work needed to be done to organise SAG in Nepal was not performed either by the previous government or by the new government right after the elections which led to multiple postponements of the sporting event. So few months after the election when everything was finally settling, the Ministry of Youth and Sports along with NOC and NSC submitted a commitment letter to South Asia Olympic Committee in March 2018.

In December, we have no other option than to hold the event no matter what because the sporting event has already been postponed twice. Also, because it's a matter of the country's reputation. We shouldn't lose this opportunity to promote ourselves in the South Asian and international markets. The postponements have already created a negative image of Nepal but we can still rectify our mistakes, create a positive image of Nepal and promote Visit Nepal 2020 tourism campaign through holding SAG 2019 in December. The Ministry has been coordinating with NOC frequently and

they have assured us that the overall management and construction processes will be completed before the deadline. In the same light, we have been updating and assuring Olympic committees of participating countries and South Asia Olympic Council about the sporting event.

Through this experience, not only the government and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, but we as in the sporting association and affiliated organisations, parliamentarians, politicians and other Ministries have learned that the political situation of the country - whether it's stable or unstable - and change in the government shouldn't hamper the commitments we have taken whether it's regarding the sports sector or any other. Such activities and events are connected with the country's reputation and no one is above protecting, maintaining and elevating the country's reputation.

Construction and renovation of sporting venues have taken speed only in the eleventh hour. Your comments.

We Nepalis have a tendency to do our work in the eleventh hour and we need to eradicate this negative culture. The construction and renovation of the stadiums and sporting venues were delayed due to change in government, but this shouldn't be an excuse. The ongoing plans and works of the former government should have been transferred seamlessly to the new government and the development works shouldn't have been halted whether it is the construction of stadiums or any other infrastructure. We - those involved in politics, parliament, ministries, government and sports associations - have learned a great lesson from the postponement and the ongoing eleventh-hour construction of stadiums and sports venues for SAG. The central, provincial and local

governments have decided on making plans regarding further construction of stadiums, sports venues, training facilities and recreational areas right after SAG 2019 for execution as soon as possible. I think within 2-4 years there will be a lot of sporting infrastructures all over Nepal.

Because of the delay in construction of stadiums, sporting venues and training facilities, especially our athletes have lost 'home ground' advantage.

Can the country expect medals and from which sports in SAG 2019?

There is a high chance of Nepali athletes winning a lot of medals in SAG 2019 and performing better than past SAGs. Though the number of gold medals might be fewer than other medals, our target is to achieve the second position in the overall medal tally. Particularly in martial arts, there is a high probability of Nepali athletes winning medals.

Due to unavailability of training facilities, closed-door camps and regular competitions and tournaments in Nepal, athletes are said to lack a competitive mindset. Last minute trainings and preparations do not help either. Your comments.

I agree that a lot needs to be done in terms of sports management in Nepal. It's not just up to the athletes to participate and win medals for the country. Behind the scene, there are coaches, assistant coaches, medical and fitness teams, etc. who make the athletes capable to perform and win medals which fall under sports management. Now we are not just concerned about athlete participation; policies that can benefit sports sector should be introduced which will encourage athletes to engage fully in sports without having to find other jobs. Also, sport needs to attract commercial interest and it's something we are currently working on.

The private sector is said to be ready to invest in sports. Is the government ready to facilitate such partnerships?

Collaboration between the private sector and government is vital in any form of development and indeed, the government alone can't invest and make sports infrastructures. Examples of such collaboration can be seen globally that has uplifted the sports and the economy of the country. Friendly policies and environment should be created by the government so that the private sector can see the potential of sports in Nepal and invest willingly. Right now, the private sector or companies have been showing their support by sponsoring sporting events only, but if they want to develop and construct stadiums and training grounds, public-private partnership is the correct way to go.

What are your thoughts on internal conflict during selections, corruption in ANFA, NOC and other such organisations for political or personal benefit? Do you plan to address such issues?

Sports and national politics will always be correlated to each other, but there is no room for internal politics, political interferences and nepotism in the sports sector. National politics should be used as a medium to develop the sports sector. The things that create a negative environment in this sector need to be completely eradicated and strict actions should be taken if anyone is found doing so. We have been monitoring and taking strict action against these. We are planning to make the selection process of the athletes in any sport completely transparent so that no one will raise questions or blame us later on.

Nepali athletes are not paid well due to which youth aren't encouraged or focused on sports as a career. What can be the solution?

It's mainly about providing opportunities to youths and athletes and developing



a positive environment and economy. We, the Parliamentary Committee members, are holding discussions and meetings regarding making correct policies so that youths and athletes would benefit, stay and work in their respective sector or sport, and a profitable business environment and job opportunities can be created around sports sector. But, it is up to the government to pass and implement the policies we have drafted.

Though there are more than 190 sports associations registered in NSC, only 27 member associations are associated with NOC and Nepal barely participates or hosts games in 50 sports. Can you explain this?

Yes, various people have opened up sport associations and registered with NSC. We don't know whether they are holding a compulsory annual national tournament or not. I have been advocating against such associations who aren't even meeting basic criteria that a sports association should meet. NSC and the Ministry should be auditing every sports association individually and dissolving the non-functioning associations so that this question will not arise again to

anyone representing the sports sector.

Regarding NOC, if a sports association fulfils all our norms like representing an Olympic game and affiliated by respective international federations, only then they can apply for NOC membership.

You are the President of Nepal Ski Association, what is the current situation of this sport in Nepal?

Nepal is known as a Himalayan country but Nepalis aren't aware of winter sports at all. I started the Nepal Ski Association to develop winter sports, particularly skiing, in Nepal, but we haven't been able to develop the necessary infrastructure for this sport. Poor and no road connections, elevation difficulties, change in seasons and global warming are the main reasons behind it. Yet we have been trying to promote this sport by bringing experts from Switzerland for surveys around Langtang, Kalinchowk, Manang and Mustang regions so that we can organise occasional, national and international tournaments. Skiing tournaments aren't easy to organise primarily because it is hard to develop and there are very few appropriate places. Artificial ski parks can be made, but it will be hard for us to sustain because of its operating cost.

This sport has a lot of potential in Nepal but skiing tournaments are difficult to organise mainly because of Nepal's geographical position and our financial situation. We conduct our tournaments according to the financial support we receive. If we receive additional support from the government and private sector, we can organise international tournaments as well which will put Nepal on the global skiing map. **B**

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CHIIYA

How an ordinary drink has turned into one of Nepal's biggest exports

Text by Sajeet M. Rajbhandari

With over 170 years of cultural history, tea has certainly embedded itself to become a part of the Nepali lifestyle. From being an early morning beverage to start the day to an excuse for old acquaintances to sit down and chat, tea has become phenomenal socio-cultural glue. While it might seem trivial at first glance, the way Nepal interacts with tea has led it to become one of Nepal's most promising exports and is an industry worth billions of rupees. If given the correct attention and nurture, tea is capable of becoming so much more than a mere beverage.

Deepak Khanal, the acting Executive Director for the Nepal Tea and Coffee Development Board shares that the first recorded coming of tea into Nepal was when Jung Bahadur Rana brought back some tea plants as a gift from his visit to China. These plants were then taken to the district of Ilam and has now

turned into one of Nepal's biggest tea plantations. "Even the tea that we consume today on a daily basis is the same species as the ones that were brought from China," shares Khanal. He goes on to add, "The Ilam tea gardens that we all know and hear about led to the development of more tea gardens at different places. Not limiting itself to just one geographic location, the process of tea cultivation has reached five other districts in the East: Ilam, Panchthar, Jhapa, Dhankuta and Tehrathum. Today tea plantation has reached 18 districts commercially." However, Khanal also mentions that the original Eastern districts continue to maintain top spot in terms of production and market share, with Jhapa leading the table producing 18.8 million kilograms in the 2016/2017 fiscal year alone and Ilam following at second place with 4.9 million kilograms.

This significant difference in production numbers can be

linked with the types of tea that are grown in the region. According to Khanal, "There are two basic categories of tea that is grown in Nepal. One of which is produced in only one district out of all 77 districts in Nepal, and that is Jhapa. This tea is what we call CTC (Crush, Tear, Curl) tea and is consumed by a large number of people on a daily basis." He adds, "The other type of tea is known as orthodox tea which is usually grown in hillier geographic regions. From orthodox tea stems out a number of other variations, with the likes of green tea, oolong tea, black tea, white tea and so many more."

When asked why CTC tea is only commercially grown in Jhapa, Khanal states that a study regarding this is still due. Nevertheless, he mentions, "Close to the geographic area of Jhapa's famous Himalayan Tea Garden is Morang's Uribari situated right across Mawa river; here we don't see a single tea plantation. It is not that the people don't want to

grow tea but the soil seems to be unyielding when it comes to CTC tea."

While the annual amount of production is much greater for CTC, it is actually orthodox tea that is seen to have much more economic value. Khanal claims that only approximately 5 million kilograms worth of orthodox is generated annually, it is also the most sought after for export. Jagannath Nepal, owner of Himalayan Garden Tea Shop, one of Thamel's oldest tea shops, agrees with Khanal when it comes to the matter of value that orthodox tea carries. "CTC tea tends to grow in larger quantities unlike orthodox tea. Orthodox tea tends to be much finer with smaller leaves and carries a more distinct taste profile." explains Nepal, "Orthodox tea is more of a boutique purchase while CTC tea is something that is processed and easily mass produced." However, this also means that orthodox tea has a really small demand in the local market unlike most domestic

commercial tea brands.

"Usually the people who buy orthodox tea are foreigners," says Nepal, "They usually buy 100 grams or so of tea at a time as souvenirs, with the exception of Chinese tourists that tend to purchase in bulk. Aside from a few enthusiasts, there are hardly any local Nepali buyers."

This doesn't seem to be the case for Rakura, a tea brand from one of Nepal's largest commercial tea manufacturers and exporters. Ravi Rathi, the Executive Director of Rakura states that for them commercialising and mass producing orthodox green and black tea has been an excellent move. "We are surprised by how well our green tea has taken off," states Rathi who initially planned for Rakura to be a more niche product but is now finding it in local 'kirana pasals' around the country. "The demand is just going up every year. In fact, the green tea market in Nepal - at least for us - is growing over a 100% year on year," claims Rathi.

The sale of orthodox tea is also very dependent on the season of harvest. The tea harvest in Nepal are in fact generally classified into four different flushes: spring, summer, monsoon and autumn. The spring flush is considered the best of all four harvests. 100 grams of SFTGFOP-1 (Super Fine Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe - Grade 1) - the finest rank for teas - from the spring flush in Ilam and costs somewhere around Rs. 1200.

So how do such fine teas travel all the way from a tea garden in Ilam to a cup of brew in our homes? Well according to Rathi, the process that tea goes through to become what we drink everyday is a very vivid and skillful journey. "For Rakura, we run four different factories. Two of which are orthodox, one for CTC and a factory for packaging," shares Rathi who also states that their final product is sourced from



"We export tea in two primary ways. One is that we export directly to India and the other is that we send our product through India to other nations."

Deepak Khanal

Acting Executive Director
for the Nepal Tea and
Coffee Development Board

their own factories and some select high grade tea factories. Rathi further explains, "The first process that we go through while manufacturing tea is tasting. We bring samples from different gardens for tasting. Once the tea has been selected, the produce from Ilam or Jhapa is brought to our warehouse in Biratnagar where it is placed in a state-of-the-art climate-controlled facility. The produce then goes through a processing facility after which it is sent through a machine that makes them into tea-bags. Those tea-bags are then finally packaged." These packaged products then don't just reach the local shops and supermarkets but also travel across the globe to foreign consumers.

As a matter of fact, coffee, tea and spices contributed to Rs. 6.4 billion in export in the fiscal year 2017/2018 and is one of the nation's most promising exports. "We export tea in two primary ways," shares Khanal, "One is that we export directly to India and the other is that we send our product through India to other nations."



"The demand is just going up every year. In fact, the green tea market in Nepal - at least for us - is growing over a 100% year on year."

Ravi Rathi

Executive Director of
Rakura Tea

Rathi is confident about the tea industry in Nepal and claims, "This (tea) will be Nepal's largest export in the future. In terms of value, Nepali tea is one of the best in the world." As a matter of fact, Nepal exported over 15 metric tons of tea in the fiscal year 2017/18 alone which was commercially worth well over Rs 3 billion.

However, it is not that the tea industry is working without any problem. "Over the years we have seen that Nepali tea was either blended into finer tea without the mention of its origin, or was sold singularly as high-end Indian or Chinese tea," admits Rathi. Khanal also agrees with this situation, saying, "Many businesses often complain to us that the tea produced in the Eastern region of Nepal is many-a-times bought in bulk by Indian manufacturers, after which it is taken to Darjeeling and packed, labeled and sold off as Darjeeling tea." The tea from these two regions are often said to have a similar taste profile. But while Darjeeling tea has made a name for itself worldwide, the quality of Nepali tea is still unknown to a large part of the world. Furthermore, when compared with



"CTC tea tends to grow in larger quantities unlike orthodox tea. Orthodox tea tends to be much finer with smaller leaves and carries a more distinct taste profile."

Jagannath Nepal

owner of Himalayan Garden
Tea Shop

competing nations, the Nepali tea industry hasn't even been able to scratch the surface. According to Rathi, "Today we are exporting about \$30 million worth of tea; Sri Lanka exports \$1.3 billion dollars. We produce better tea than they do yet we're doing so much less in export." And while we did earn Rs 3 billion from exporting tea in 2017/2018, it is also important to take into account that Nepal also imported Rs.120.9 million worth of tea in the same year.

While the tea industry in Nepal has come a long way since it first started, the industry still has a long way to go. Blessed with ideal geographic conditions, Nepal is a haven when it comes to commercially producing high grade tea and is well capable of becoming a top-ranking export commodity. But authorities, producers and consumers, all need to pull up their sleeves and contribute in uplifting the status of the excellence of the Nepali chhiya. **B**



**DR. SUNIL
CHITRAKAR**
CEO, MAHAGUTHI

MAHAGUTHI

CRAFTING A SUCCESSFUL NON-PROFIT

Text by Sajeet M. Rajbhandari.

Built around the core principles of fair trade and local sustainability, Mahaguthi has aged beautifully as a Nepali entrepreneurship. A non-profit that sought to disrupt the traditional trends that most businesses followed, Mahaguthi is a brand that paved way for kick-starters in Nepal today. Almost three decades of age, here's the story behind how a small idea nurtured itself into a

successful and sustainable non-profit business.

Bringing Mahaguthi to life

It started out all the way back in 1984 as a standalone project, Mahaguthi found life through the need to bring positive social change. "We started as a project made to empower women by selling the crafts made by them," shares Dr. Sunil Chitrakar,

the CEO of Mahaguthi. "We were also affiliated with Nepal Charkha Pracharak Gandhi Tulasi Smarak Mahaguthi." It soon started to work with small artisans from all corners of Nepal. Chitrakar fondly recounts how the team travelled to various parts of the nation in order to work hand in hand with local communities. "We provided trainings and other capacity building

support," shares Chitrakar. Doing so allowed Mahaguthi to create a fully locally sourced product lineup that they sell both domestically as well as export to foreign shores.

Mahaguthi today is an accredited fair-trade company. What this means is that unlike companies that seek to maximise profit, Mahaguthi is a brand that seeks to ensure the economic and social well being

of the people that contribute to it. It views its artisans and producers as partners who maintain a non-hierarchical status in the company, even if it means that the brand will pocket a little less chunk of the profit. For the Mahaguthi team, this is a small price to pay for the value of equity and integrity that they dearly believe in. After all they do live by their motto, "Craft With Conscience."

Crafts & More

The Nepali handicrafts market wasn't as diverse and saturated three decades ago in contrast to where it is now; and the number of NGOs and INGOs that worked in the cottage industry scene was even more minute. So, when Mahaguthi dived into rethinking how the crafts business in Nepal worked, it was truly a game changer. Back when Mahaguthi first came into being, most businesses were family based and their management was passed from one generation to the next. Chitrakar expresses that these business models were rather rudimentary in nature and lacked innovation and the ability to expand. With Mahaguthi, he sought to challenge the norm with a company that was "built by the people for the people" and was able to reach markets that had before been untouched. What's more interesting is that rather than disregarding these pre-existing local businesses, Mahaguthi worked alongside them, learning from them and in turn educating these local institutions as well. In fact, Mahaguthi managed to turn them into a resource pool and exist in a sort of symbiosis with them. "We go around Nepal, trying to discover local skill and local resources and then turn them into lifestyle products. If you browse through our shop, you'll see lifestyle products with traditional skills," Chitrakar proudly shares, "What we do in turn is add value to these items through product design and marketing or through providing support to these artisans in design and training them in

modern technologies."

Besides working with more than 65 local artisan groups across the country, Mahaguthi also has its own production units that specialise in the production of home textile, garments, felt, handmade paper and such. Directly and indirectly creating job opportunities for more than 1100 people, Mahaguthi is also a pioneer when it comes to craft development. Chitrakar illustrates this by diving into how 20 years ago, art styles such as that of the Mithila community had hardly been commercialised by craft producers with the exception of Mahaguthi.

Value of Fair Trade

For Mahaguthi, fairness and equity have always had a pivotal position in how the company operates. The very fact that Mahaguthi was conceived as a non-profit organisation ensured that it would never overstep the boundaries of fair trade for economic gain. To the Mahaguthi team, this means to create sustainable products through local manpower all the while maintaining quality and safeguarding their economic responsibilities to their producers. Even the very name of the brand is meant as a representation of the Mahaguthi way of life. According to Chitrakar, "Mahaguthi is made up of two words, 'Maha' meaning big and 'Guthi' which translates to be cooperative. So, the brand literally means big cooperative."

When asked how the scale between the value of a product and value for fair trade balances out, Chitrakar provides the following discourse, "Nepali products are often considered to be more expensive than their mass-produced counterparts. And there are so many ways to produce cheaper products, from choosing cheap raw materials, or allocating cheaper labor costs, or using environmentally unsustainable methods. However, while the end result may be cheap, but it will be so

at someone else's cost." This way of manufacture doesn't fit well within Mahaguthi's school of thought. Mahaguthi as a matter of fact is a firm believer in creating equal opportunity for all of its employees, and goes as far as to include a fully functioning day-care center at its production centers for children of the 100% women employees. While domestic made crafts might carry a slightly heavier price tag at first glance, Mahaguthi believes that the little things such as the improvement in the quality of life of labourer's are all worth going the extra mile for.

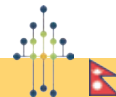
But how sustainable is a non-profit business model in Nepal? Well according to what Mahaguthi has witnessed and learnt during all its years in operation, there are a handful of key steps that a young startup or social enterprise should keep in mind. Reinvesting profits within the business itself proved to be a smart move for Mahaguthi and really helped the brand maintain a steady growth. Another major point is to target the right clientele; Chitrakar shared how a large part of all businesses are dependent on the loyal 20% of customers. Furthermore, learning how to avoid competition is also key when it comes to establishing the selling ability of a product. Mahaguthi invites competition and believes it to be a part of life; they manage to survive in such saturated market spaces by bringing out innovative design that is unique to them.

Moving With Time

A lot has changed during the three decades that Mahaguthi has been in existence. The way businesses function has been radically altered and the market space has been saturated to the brim. In order to stand its ground in the industry, Mahaguthi had to learn to adapt with the times as well. "In the past we never really invested much when it came to things like product designing and most of our designs would stick to

its traditional roots," recounts Chitrakar. He follows up by saying, "As we moved on, we learned the value of good design and stated to keep up with market tastes and preferences." This adaptive nature that Mahaguthi adopted gradually helped them take strictly traditional crafts and integrate them into lifestyle products that fit into the Nepalese home as well as in foreign markets. Mahaguthi has in fact been constantly updating its product lineup bringing new product trends such as essential oils and ceramics to their shelves.

"In the 80s, any ethnic product could sell very easily and Nepalese products were very exotic for foreign buyers. But as the market grew, it also started to demand more from us and we had to become more design oriented," shares Chitrakar. Times such as the Maoist insurgency proved to be especially difficult for a brand that relied on people from all over the country to sustain its business, but in the end Mahaguthi was able to pull through and its values stuck with it through thick and thin. In present day, the Mahaguthi brand sees itself expand its business and business model across the globe. While the brand does export to places such as Japan and Europe, a stronger global presence would be beneficial not just for the brand but for the Nepali economy as well. "We also want to expand our ideas. Fair trade is based on dialogue, transparency, and respect," says Chitrakar who considers it their success. Mahaguthi is also open to franchising the brand both domestically and internationally, with a strong intention of expanding to regions such as Pokhara and Lumbini. **B**



Gold: Time For A Paradigm Shift



Vivek Risal is associated with Mercantile Exchange Nepal Limited in the capacity of Manager in Research and Development Department. He can be contacted at r&d@mexnepal.com

2019 has been a topsy-turvy year for gold. After observing a slightly bearish year in 2018, the bullion commenced 2019 with a value of \$1282.09 per troy ounce. Initially, the market treaded bearish for the first few months slumping to the year low price of \$1266.06 per troy ounce during the month of May. Subsequently, the yellow metal traded higher and attained the highest price of \$1557 per troy ounce in September, a 23% increase since the trough days. As we have entered the final month of 2019, it is highly probable that the market will remain in the upper range and end the year on a strong footing.

One of the significant factors that have kept the bullion afloat is the connotations of it as a safe haven asset. Historically, it is more valuable during times of geopolitical uncertainty. As per the latest estimates, 20% of the gold reserve stocks are held by various central banks and notable international monetary organisations. Likewise, the US Dollar has an inverse relationship with the yellow metal since gold is generally denominated in the greenback. The appreciation of the US Dollar negatively affects the gold and vice versa. However,

the preceding assumption was thwarted in 2019 since traders observed a simultaneous increase in the value of gold and US Dollars.

China: Leading Gold Producer

Excluding Antarctica, gold is mined on every continent and is extracted from mines of various shapes and sizes. In 2018, China was declared as the world's largest producers of gold and accounted for approximately 12% of the total global production. China was followed by Australia, Russia, USA and Canada. In the financial markets, the production details affect the price of gold. In hindsight, along with the supply, the demand and the short-term trading acumen of the speculators also drive the prices.

market analysts opine that although there is a hike since the start of the decade, the production has stalled and not changed significantly since 2016. Among the numerous reasons, it is argued that the 'easy and accessible gold' has already been mined and miners now have to do the hard yards and dig deeper to access gold reserves of quality standards. Along with the new hazards during mining, miners also have to confront the environmental impact that lies ahead. This only increases the cost to get less gold lying deep in the mines. All these factors add to the cost resulting in an increase in the gold prices.

Supply Limits

In current times, the demand and supply are in a relative balance. The paradox

takes a minimum of 10 years to develop a large-scale gold mine once the suitable mining land is found.

Given the pace of extraction rates in contemporary times, South Africa, one of the largest gold producers in the world, could invariably run out of accessible gold within the next 40 years. In other estimates, it is debated that gold mining could reach the point of being economically unsustainable by 2050 globally, although new discoveries could push the date back.

Conclusion

The advent of technology and the endless possibilities with it may also make it possible to extract some known reserves that currently are not economically viable to access. But, it is highly unlikely that



In the top gold producing economies, mining of gold brings an increase in employment, foreign direct investment, foreign exchange and the revenues generated from tax. As per statistics, the mine production of gold was approximately 3,500 tonnes in 2018, an increase of 1,100 tonnes since 2010. However,

of the story is since analysts have a limited idea of how much gold is left to be mined, it is genuinely impossible to zero in on how long the current reserves will last. Gold being a scarce commodity, the majority of exploration activity by gold mining companies does not find commercially viable quantities of gold. Generally, it

large scale gold mining will continue past this century given the technology advances or the minute discoveries of unknown gold deposits around the world. The paradigm shift will appear in the determination of the prices and new elements will join the bandwagon as drivers of the bullion in the ensuing days. **B**

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KTM



Tech Round Up 2019

By Samrat Amatya

2019 has been a great year in the world of technology. We saw a lot of innovative and useful products throughout the year. Even in Nepal, we saw a lot of new launches from renowned brands. But among the clutter of gadgets available in the market, here are a few worth owning:

Mi Band 4

Price: Rs. 3,600



Mi Band 4 is one of the most robust and inexpensive fitness bands available in the market. It comes with a sleek design and a lightweight body. For a guy coming from a clunky smartwatch, this light heft was very important. For people into fitness, the band will not distract you when you are on a jog or pumping that iron. Besides being ergonomic, the band is also a great activity tracker. You can record a slew of activities like running, hiking, cycling, and swimming. Yes, swimming! Since the band is 5ATM rated for water resistance, you can take it for a casual poolside dip. The band also packs a heart rate sensor and sleep tracking capabilities. Other features include an online band face options for customization and information sharing with friends.

Samsung Galaxy Note 10+

Price: Rs. 1,35,000



The Samsung Galaxy Note 10+ is the best smartphone in the market right now. It packs a perfect combination of work and play. For those wanting to get a phone for productivity, the Note 10+ is the way to go. The phone still packs the useful S-Pen (stylus) now with even more features. Other key aspects include a massive 6.8-inch Quad HD AMOLED display, rear quad-camera set up, an in-display fingerprint scanner, and a large 4300mAh battery. If size and money are of no issue, the Samsung Galaxy Note 10+ is the best smartphone you can buy right now.

iPad Air 2019

Price: Rs. 1,35,000



iPads are the best tablets available in the market right now. They hit just the right spot between productivity and pleasure. The latest addition to Apple's iPad line up is the iPad Air 2019. The tablet is the revamped version of the popular iPad Air 2. Compared to its predecessor, the tablet has received a lot of upgrades, mostly internal. The new device packs an Apple A12 Bionic chipset backed by a

4-core Apple GPU. This gives it superb graphics performance with smooth day-to-day usage. Unlike the Air 2, the new iPad comes with better productivity capability. It now supports both the Apple Pencil and the Smart keyboard cover. This makes taking notes and working on a paper that much easier on the iPad Air 2019. A great piece of technology to balance both work and play.

GoPro HERO8 Black

Price: Rs. 51,500



If you are a big fan of adventure, then a GoPro is a must-have tech for you. And the latest addition to the lineup, the GoPro HERO8 Black, will blow your socks off. This new action cam packs a 12MP sensor with a more impact-resistant lens. The design also has been streamlined compared to its predecessor. It is more compact with better access to the battery and mount port. And did I even mention that you can now take photos and videos up to 4K 60fps with the GoPro!

The company has also improved its stabilisation with the new Hyper Smooth 2.0 technology. This will help take stable videos even in the harshest of condition. The Slow-Motion video also gets an update with a higher resolution of 1080p at 240fps. Overall, the GoPro HERO8 is the action-cam to have right now.

MacBook Pro 16

Price: Upwards of Rs. 2,50,000



The MacBook Pro 16 is the Swiss army knife of laptops. It probably is the laptop you have been waiting for from Apple. For this one, the Cupertino based company left no stones unturned. The new MacBook has it all from a sleek almost bezel-less display to a more ergonomic keyboard layout. The touch bar is also back with now a separate key for the escape button and fingerprint scanner.

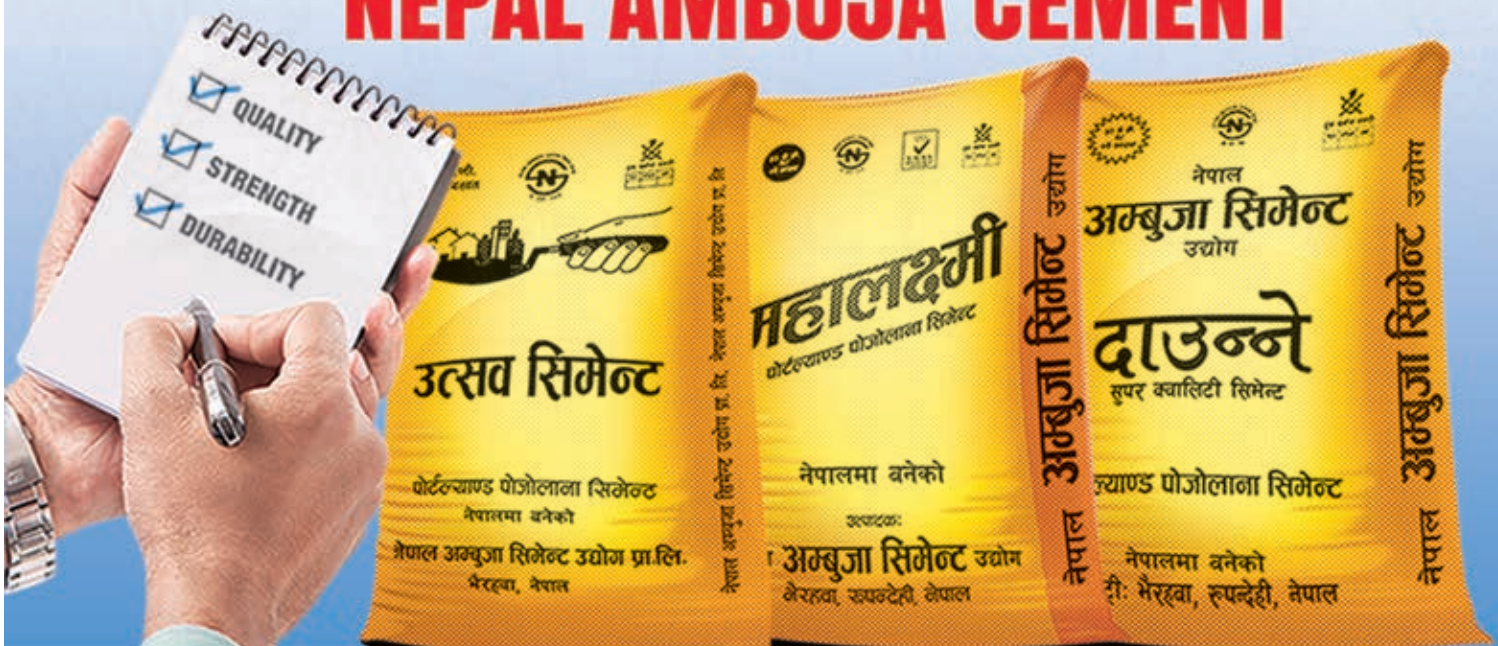
The MacBook Pro 16 also packs some crazy internals with a 9th gen Core i7 processor backed by 4/8GB AMD Radeon Pro 5300M GPU. Talking about storage, you can pack this thing with 512GB SSD all the way up to a whopping 8TB. That is some crazy specs for a laptop! Although the product is still not available in Nepal, it is worth a mention for the amazing product it is. The laptop will nonetheless launch very soon in Nepal. **B**



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beed's take on the market

During the review period of October 27 to November 21, 2019, the Nepal Stock Exchange (NEPSE) index went down by 28.74 points (-2.50%) to close at 1120.60 points. Impressive return declaration by few commercial banks have somewhat managed to hold the market demand nonetheless overall market sentiment remains fairly low. Further, the restructuring of the cabinet of ministers, which stands as a major move in the market, also seems to have had no effect on the overall investment sentiment. Since the total market capitalisation of the banking stocks is the highest on NEPSE (58%), it has been somewhat reflected in the market volume. The total market turnover during the period rose by 22.02% and stood at Rs 4.78 billion.

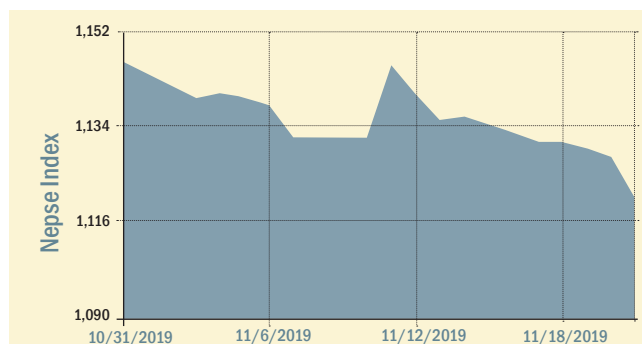
During the review period, contrary to the previous period, all of the sub-indices landed in the red zone. The Manufacturing & Processing sub-index (-6.39%) was the biggest loser as share value of Bottlers Nepal (-Rs 174) and Shivam Cements (-Rs 83) went down. Hydropower sub-index (-4.55%) was second in line with decrease in the share value of Chilime Hydropower (-Rs 64) and Butwal Power (-Rs 21).

Similarly, Non-Life Insurance sub-index (-3.74%) was also in the losing side with fall in the share value of Rastriya

Beema Company (-Rs 184) and Prudential Insurance (-Rs 60). Finance sub-index (-3.32%) also faced a drop in the share value of United Finance (-Rs 8). Following this, Hotels sub-index (-3.22%) saw a decrease in the share value of Orientals Hotels (-Rs 65) and Taragon Regency Hotel (-Rs 25). Life Insurance sub-index (-2.71%) also declined with decrease in the share value of National Life Insurance Company (-Rs 31) and Life Insurance Company (-Rs 30). Commercial Bank sub-index (-2.41%) also saw a downfall with the fall in the share value of Prabhu Bank (-Rs 39) and Nabil Bank (-Rs 28). Others sub-index (-2.04%) followed suit with slump in the share value of Citizen Investment Trust (-Rs 65). Development Bank sub-index (-1.75%) also shed value with significant decrease in the share value of Mahalaxmi Bikas (-Rs 39) and Miteri Development Bank (-Rs 10). Besides, Microfinance sub-index (-6.39%) also witnessed a plunge in the share value of Mero Microfinance (-Rs 146).

News and Highlights

Lately, there has been a rise in issuance of debentures by financial institutions aided by the provision in the monetary policy. Apart from private commercial banks, "C" class financial institutions and government owned banks have started to issue debentures. Goodwill



Source: Nepal Stock Exchange Ltd.

Finance is moving to issue '12% Goodwill Finance Limited Debenture 2083' worth Rs 250 million with 12% interest yield for seven years. Likewise, Nepal Bank is going to float '10% Nepal Bank Debenture 2083' worth Rs 2.5 billion with a maturity period of 7 years with 10% annual interest yield. Also Agricultural Development Bank is in the process to issue debentures under '10.35% ADBL Rinptra 2083' worth Rs 2.5 billion providing 10.35% interest rate for 7 years.

In the public issue front, SEBON has approved Initial Public Offering (IPO) of NMB Laghubitta of 2,430,093 equity shares worth Rs 243 million. Sunrise Capital has been appointed as its issue manager. ICRA Nepal has assigned [ICRANP] IPO Grade 4 rating to the issue, indicating below average fundamentals. Similarly, Sunrise Capital has floated its first mutual fund scheme named Sunrise First Mutual Fund Scheme with 10 crore units of fresh equity shares. Care Ratings Nepal has assigned Fund Management Quality Rating (FMQR) AMC 3, which means "adequate assurance on management quality of Assets Management Company (AMC)" to the company.

Likewise, SEBON has added IPO issue of Himalayan Hydropower of 2,250,000 shares worth Rs 22.50 million to its pipeline. Janata Capital Limited has been appointed as the issue manager. ICRA Nepal Limited has assigned a [ICRANP] IPO Grade 4 for the issue.

Citizens Bank Debentures named '10.25% Citizens Bank Rinptra 2086' with 25 lakh units of debentures at par value of Rs 1000 per unit has also been added to SEBON's pipeline. The total value of the issue is estimated to stand at Rs 2.50 billion (USD 22.18 million). Global IME Capital has been appointed as its issue manager.

Outlook

Investors' confidence continued to remain low throughout the review period. Apart from the secondary market, the primary market is also witnessing low investor participation. For instance, the primary offering of hydropower companies have come under significant pressure as reflected by their under subscription and significant price drop in the secondary market. Measures such as annual dividend announcements from previous fiscal year and first quarter earnings results published by listed companies mostly Commercial banks have helped in giving some respite to investors, but apart from putting a short halt to the persisting downtrend, no significant improvements have happened. The market is likely to continue with current trend until improvements in market liquidity and volume. **B**

This is an analysis from beed management pvt. ltd. No expressed or implied warrant is made for usefulness or completeness of this information and no liability will be accepted for consequences of actions taken on the basis of this analysis.

	Oct 27th, 2019	Nov 21st, 2019	% Change
NEPSE Index	1,149.34	1,120.60	-2.50%
Sub-Indices			
Commercial Bank	1,056.67	1,031.19	-2.41%
Development Bank	1,562.97	1,535.61	-1.75%
Hydropower	957.78	914.23	-4.55%
Finance	576.30	557.15	-3.32%
Non-Life Insurance	4,219.18	4,061.59	-3.74%
Others	649.40	636.16	-2.04%
Hotels	1,814.34	1,755.88	-3.22%
Microfinance	1,474.16	1,473.67	-0.03%
Life Insurance	5,093.04	4,955.24	-2.71%
Manufacturing & Processing	2,414.00	2,259.76	-6.39%

Source: Nepal Stock Exchange Ltd.



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Subaru Forester 2.0I-S: Just Perfect!

Text by Avant Shrestha

Subaru's 2019 Forester 2.0i-S is a vehicle with an entirely different appeal. From the exterior design to the interior comfort along with an excellent driving experience and plethora of safety and drive assistance features, the Forester is one dynamic package. The Forester 2.0i-S ticks all the boxes that is required in a premium luxury vehicle and delivers in all the areas that a potential buyer would like in an SUV. It possesses a rugged capability along with comfort and technology at a good value compared to other vehicles in its segment. Additionally, Subaru's All Wheel Drive has become a standard for all its vehicles.

In Western markets however, the Subaru brand is traditionally popular among a dedicated group of buyers. Marketing is targeted towards this specific niche centered on those who desire the company's signature drive train engine, all-wheel/rough-road capabilities or affordable SUV car markets.

The Forester is definitely one of these vehicles that has a personality. According to North American standards, its styling suggests that the Foresters will be at home in the mountains with a superior higher ground clearance of 220 mm, various driving modes to ensure that the Forester is ready for all road conditions, comfortable cabin rooms, ample storage space and a host of technologies that assist and provide optimum comfort for the driver and the passengers.

Exterior

For starters, the Forester 2.0i-S looks robust in all the right areas. Its rugged components passed down from its predecessor combined with modern upright style to appease the modern market give the vehicle its unique personality. The overall dimension of the vehicle is 4625 mm in length, 1815 mm in width and 1730 mm in height giving it an imposing



build on the road.

The LED headlamps on the front and the LED rear combination lamps at the back demand attention; apart from just being eye catching, it ensures good visibility around crucial turns at night.

Interior

What catches the eye is the layout, finish and the space. The interior shapes are lined with hard plastic in interesting colour combination. The interior design is done right with ample amount of leg room and head space for both front and back seats. Complementing the spacious cabin, the doors have wide opening that allows easy access as well.

Forester provides infotainment features that everyone can appreciate. The multifunctional and meter display are attractive and easy to glance at as the car is being driven. This is an important feature which is able to increase visibility and security whilst driving. The vehicle is equipped with 8 inch touchscreen display that is user friendly and easy to navigate. Additionally, the Subaru Forester features two USB ports, Bluetooth, a four-speaker sound system, satellite radio and HD Radio, and Apple CarPlay and Android Auto smartphone integration.

Observing the boot space, the Forester has 35 cubic feet of space in the boot which is roughly 1000 liters of cargo

space. And it can be increased by folding the rear seats to 76 cubic feet which is about 2000 liters of additional space which would be ideal while taking the family out for a trip outside the city or shopping for the entire household.

The Drive

The total displacement of the 2.0i-S stands at 2000 cc with maximum power of 146bhp and maximum torque of 235 Nm. Critics claim that there is not much to dislike about the model, except for the vehicle's lackluster acceleration. However, given multiple road tropes, a slightly slower acceleration should not and will not hold the Forester back. The steering, handling and braking feel relatively smooth, comfortable and very respectable being able to change direction with speed and confidence.

While the inner states are well padded and have good bolstering and lumbar support, the suspension is great. It levels out the city's famous potholes by giving the driver and the passenger a seamless experience. X-Mode drive setting includes trail capability and hill descent control for better traction on various terrains.

Apart from the drive quality, the Forester is equipped with 63-liter fuel tank and has surprisingly impressive fuel mileage for an SUV. Overall, the Forester feels very comfortable, gliding over both smooth

surfaces and rough patches on the road.

Safety Features

Subaru is one company that gives extra emphasis on safety and the Forester 2.0i-S is no different. A rearview camera has become a standard in every automobile today and Forester is obliged with the same standards. Additionally, it consists of the Eyesight Driver-Assist technology features. Eyesight includes a pre-collision braking system, lane keep assist, lane departure warning, and adaptive cruise control. Additional safety features are available, including blind spot monitoring, rear cross traffic alert, lane change assist, reverse automatic braking, adaptive headlights, and Subaru's new Driver Focus Distraction Mitigation system, which monitors drivers for signs of negligence.

Verdict

We have already established that Subaru may not be for everyone; but it is definitely for the select few who opt to choose a superior vehicle or purchase it for the right reason. The 2019 Subaru Forester ranked third in compact SUVs and the winner of 2019 best compact SUV for families. Once you take the forester out for a spin, you can tell why it deserves these accolades. This is indeed a quality premium car. The ride is smooth and the vehicle comes with all the necessary features with premium materials used throughout the cabin. It's ideal for an urban lifestyle but equally so for an outdoor and offroad experience. You can take Forester 2.0i-S home at Rs.1 Crore 34 Lakhs. But remember that the price does come with some big advantages. Prospective buyers can take the Forester out for a spin from Vijay Motors, the sole authorised dealer of Subaru Automobiles in Nepal, or even better - purchase it. **B**



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Nepal: 13 Years On, No Justice for Conflict Victims

Nepal has made no real progress on questions of justice, truth and reparations for victims of gross human rights violations and abuses during its 10-year conflict, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch (HRW) and TRIAL International said on November 26. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement to end the war was signed on November 21, 2006.

While two commissions have been set up to address conflict-era atrocities, they have not been effective and impunity and denial of access to justice to victims remain prevalent. The four human rights organisations are particularly concerned about the recent moves that suggest that the government will go forward with the appointing of commissioners without making necessary reforms to the legal framework.

"It is astonishing that so little progress has been made in responding to the clearly articulated concerns and demands of conflict victims," said Frederick Rawski, ICJ's Asia-Pacific Director on the 13th anniversary of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended the conflict in Nepal. "These demands have included a transparent and consultative process for the appointment of commissioners, and a genuine good-faith effort by political leaders and lawmakers to address serious weaknesses in the existing legal framework."

On November 18, a five-member committee formed by the government to recommend names for commissioners to be appointed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission on the Investigation of Enforced Disappearances published a list of candidates. Concerns have been raised by victims and civil society that the government will simply re-appoint past

commissioners or make political appointments that will not be adequately impartial and independent.

"It is deeply disappointing that the government has repeatedly attempted to appoint the commissioners without adequate consultation and transparency. The commissions will not gain the trust of the victims and the international community if the political parties continue to interfere in the appointment process," said Biraj Patnaik, South Asia Director at Amnesty International.

The ICJ, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and TRIAL International have repeatedly expressed concern that effective transitional justice mechanisms require strong legal foundations consistent with international law and good practices, and the political will to address the concerns of victims of the conflict. All four organisations reiterated their calls to amend the 2014 Transitional Justice Act to make it consistent with the Supreme Court's rulings and international human rights standards, as well as for the initiation of a genuine consultative and transparent process for the appointment of commissioners.

Concerns raised about the existing, and proposed, legal frameworks includes disparities between the definitions of specific crimes under international law and human rights obligations and violations under national, and international law; inadequate provisions to ensure that serious crimes under international law are subject to criminal accountability (including punishment proportionate to the seriousness of the crimes); and a reliance on compensation at the expense of other forms of reparation and remedy for conflict survivors and their families.

Under the principle of universal jurisdiction states may make it possible for their domestic criminal justice

system to investigate and prosecute crimes such as torture, committed by any person, anywhere in the world. This means that a citizen of any country, including Nepal, suspected of such crimes faces the risk of arrest and prosecution for these crimes in countries that apply universal jurisdiction. This is more likely if the Nepali authorities do not appear able and willing to prosecute those responsible for such crimes, the organisations said.

"After initial pledges to ensure truth, justice, and reparations for conflict victims, it appears that the government is once again determined to protect those responsible for the crimes," said Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia Director at Human Rights Watch. "The international community should remind Nepal that whitewashing egregious crimes will not help to dodge universal jurisdiction."



Chandragiri Hills Resort receives International Hospitality and Travel Award 2019

Chandragiri Hills Resort located at Chandragiri Hills on the outskirts of Kathmandu Valley has been awarded International Hospitality and Travel Award 2019. Indian State Minister for Culture, Prahlad Singh Patel and former Minister and Parliamentarian Vijay Goel jointly handed over the award to Founding Chairman and Proprietor of Chandragiri Hills Hemraj Dhakal at a special function organised in New Delhi, India on November 15.

Expressing his happiness, Dhakal said that not only Chandragiri Hills but the whole tourism sector of Nepal has received the award. India Tourism Development Corporation, Hospitality India and GTC Events have been providing the award to best hotels, resorts and airlines among other tourism-related organisations in South Asia annually. At the same function, General Manager of Chandragiri Hills, Abhishek Bikram Shah, was awarded the 'Youngest General Manager of the Year'.



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King's College hosts first Impact Week in Nepal



An entrepreneurship and innovation focused non-profit program called Impact Week was conducted for the first time in Nepal, hosted by King's College, Kathmandu in collaboration with Germany's Lufthansa Group Airlines on November 12.

Alongside the support of Lufthansa's social arm, Help Alliance and the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Kathmandu, representatives from various European multinational companies have come together to bring this global event to Nepal. This German award-winning program was established in 2015 in Kenya and has been successfully held in various emerging economies across the world. This year's locations include India, Jordan, Ghana and Nepal.

The Impact Week in Nepal was organised by a team of volunteers from Lufthansa Systems including the lead organisers Aman Bhattarai and Tilo Hillmer, and the lead coach Danny Tobisch. They are experts in their respective fields with a rich background of participating in Impact Week programs around the world. "It is a personal dream come true for me to bring my *matri bhumi* Nepal and *karma bhumi* Germany together for a global innovation challenge. Knowledge and skills are the most precious things

that are needed to foster Nepal's economic and social development. I am excited to welcome global innovation experts, my colleagues from the Lufthansa Group and their skills and methodologies to Kathmandu and hope to foster user-centric social innovation growth among Nepalese youths through this unique collaboration," said Aman Bhattarai, Senior Consultant at zeroG – a Lufthansa Group company – and lead organiser of the Impact Week Kathmandu.

The Impact Week Nepal 2019 was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, seven European experts transferred their knowledge about the 'design thinking' methodology to 18 Nepali academic professionals and 18 international professionals. In the second phase, the 36 newly-trained junior coaches guided approximately 120 students and young professionals from diverse colleges and field of studies through a design thinking process to solve pressing local and national level challenges. At the end of the Impact Week, all 18 teams pitched their final solutions and competed for three awards in the form of financial aid specifically aimed at supporting the teams to implement their solutions. In the closing ceremony, 18 teams from six different tracks pitched

their ideas and presented the prototypes to the panel of jury. Team Dakshyata from Education Track emerged as the winners of Impact Week Nepal 2019, followed by team Genefre and team Microroots from the Agriculture Track.

The challenges addressed during the Impact Week programme focussed on the following six areas: agriculture, tourism, mobility, arts & culture, health, and education. The six tracks were mentored by the following local organisations: Eco Himal Nepal, Nepal Tourism Board, Tootle, Kathmandu City Planning Commission, Hospital for Advanced Medicine and Surgery, and King's College.

The program allowed participants to connect with like-minded people from Kathmandu valley and around the world to learn from both the experts and each other, and to strive and create a real impact for their community and country. Altogether, this programme based on 'design-thinking' approach, contributes to promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in emerging economies as the basis for sustainable growth. With the help of this method, local students and young professionals are empowered to develop the business ideas of their own and solutions to solve problems in their local or wider community.

EvoStore launches the new iPhone 11 and 11 Pro in Nepal



EvoStore, the authorised resellers of Apple products for Nepal, launched the new iPhone 11 and 11 pro. iPhone introduces a dual-camera system in iPhone 11 and a transformative Triple Camera System in iPhone 11 pro with all-new ultra wide and wide cameras that are deeply integrated into iOS 13. New iPhone 11 is available in six new colours: purple, green, yellow, black, white and red, while iPhone 11 pro is available in four finishes including a beautiful new midnight green. iPhone 11 is available in three different variants; 64GB, 128GB and 256GB, whereas iPhone 11 pro in 64GB, 256GB and 512GB with the price starting from Rs 1,15,000 for iPhone 11 and Rs 1,62,000 for iPhone 11 pro.

The store also provides its customers with easy financing option in collaboration with financial institutions of the country and also deals with other world class brands like Bose, Harman International and Thule.

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Khalti signs agreement with LBEF for internships and job placements for e-business students



Khalti Digital Wallet and Lord Buddha Education Foundation (LBEF) have signed a strategic partnership agreement to provide internship and job placement opportunities to e-business and IT students. Manish Modi, Managing Director of Khalti and Pankaj Jalan, Chairman of LBEF signed the agreement at a special ceremony in Kathmandu on November 6.

Final year students and fresh graduates of LBEF can apply for an internship at Khalti. After a brief internship period, they will be recruited to work full-time at the company. Khalti will provide a flexible work schedule so that students do not have to miss their class and also will provide leave during exams or any other important projects in consultation with the college.

Speaking about the agreement, Manish Modi, Managing Director of Khalti shared, "We consider this collaboration as a win-win situation for both Khalti and LBEF students. One of the main agendas of both institutions is to develop the IT industry of Nepal. This collaboration will bring synergy to both institutions. We are hopeful that we will be enriching the student experience effectively and appropriately and at the same time, increasing the quality of workforce in the company."

Likewise, LBEF will provide special scholarships to the employees of Khalti who wish to join the Master's program at the college. This collaboration between Khalti and LBEF is expected to set an example of industry-academia partnership in Nepal.

NIBL-UnionPay Cards and products launched



Targeting its customers visiting China for business or leisure, NIBL will soon launch debit, credit, pre-paid travel cards and QR codes. NIBL UnionPay Cardholders can easily withdraw cash with NIBL UnionPay Cards while these cards can also be used for shopping, payments at hotels, restaurants, etc in Nepal, China and worldwide.

NIBL's CEO, Jyoti Prakash Pandey informed on November 4 that the NIBL-UnionPay International collaboration was initiated focusing on Visit Nepal Year 2020 campaign. According to the statistics of Nepal Tourism Board, 153,633 Chinese tourists visited Nepal in 2018. Meanwhile, 300,000 Chinese tourists are expected to visit Nepal during Visit Nepal Year 2020.

Samsung launches Galaxy A20s



Samsung launched Galaxy A20s comes with enhanced innovations and is made for those who want to capture and share their experiences instantaneously. As the newest addition to the Galaxy A family, it features triple rear camera, 15W fast charging and a striking design to elevate the smartphone experience of young millennials. "As a global technology leader in

the smartphone business, it is our endeavour to offer state-of-the-art innovation with superior experience to all our users. Galaxy A20s has been developed keeping in mind the smartphone needs of the Gen Z consumer for a great display, superior triple camera and captivating design with a mirror-like finish.

People are increasingly using their smartphones to share live interactions – capturing spontaneous photos, streaming live videos and connecting over shared experiences that are happening right now. Built to drive this evolution, the Galaxy A20s is packed with a compelling user experience. Also, the 8mm slim design in attractive new colours makes the Galaxy A20s all the more appealing," said Pranaya Sthapit, Mobile Business Head of Samsung Nepal.

The phone comes in three trendy colours – Green, Blue and Black, and is available in 3GB RAM + 32GB internal storage for Rs 20,690 and 4GB RAM + 64GB internal storage for Rs 23,990.

Sunrise Bank offers 10.25% Sunrise Debenture 2083

Sunrise Bank announced the issuance of 10.25% Sunrise Debenture 2083 to the general public from November 6 to 10 while in case of under-subscription the issue can be extended till December 5. The Bank is issuing a total of 30 lakh units of debenture out of which 12 lakh units are for the general public and 18 lakh units are for private placement. Similarly, out of the units offered to the general public, 60,000 units have been reserved for mutual funds. The debenture is being issued at Rs 1000 per unit and will provide 10.25% interest for a period of seven years.

Siddhartha Capital is the issue manager. Interested individuals can apply for a minimum of 25 units or a maximum of 3 lakh units. SRBL had also issued 10 Sunrise

debenture 2080 recently which has been already listed in NEPSE. This debenture is worth Rs 1 billion, making the cumulative debenture of Sunrise Bank worth Rs 4 billion. CARE Nepal Limited has assigned CARE-NP Grade A- to the debenture issue of Sunrise Bank.

CNI asks newly appointed ambassadors to focus on economic cooperation



Satish Kumar More, President of CNI, said, "There is a need of active participation of ambassadors to expand the relation with respective countries and investors in major sectors of investment like infrastructure, hydropower, tourism, modern agriculture and information technology to establish Nepal as an international investment destination." The Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) asked the newly appointed ambassadors of Nepal to Australia and Spain to focus on expansion of economic cooperation and promotion of tourism in a meeting held on November 5. Organizing a meeting with Mahesh Dahal, Nepali ambassador to Australia and Dawa Futi Sherpa, Nepali ambassador to Spain, the CNI raised issues that needed attention.



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NCHL concludes its 8th AGM



Nepal Clearing House Ltd. concluded its 8th Annual General Meeting on November 11 at Hotel Crown Imperial, Kathmandu. The AGM decided to increase the paid-up capital of the company to Rs 298,080,000 from Rs 216,000,000 through issuance of 38% bonus share from the profit earned during the fiscal year 2075/76. It also decided to provide 2% cash dividend to cover the tax provision. Authorized capital of the company has also been decided to increase to Rs 500,000,000. The company booked a net profit of Rs 237,735,786 for the fiscal year 2075/76.

The company intends to increase its capital to further re-invest into payment infrastructures, add new products and services and to enhance risk management. As per NRB's regulatory requirement, payment system operator (PSO) needs to have minimum of Rs 100,000,000 as paid-up capital for operations within Nepal, whereas it is Rs 250,000,000 for those handling international payments.

During the fiscal year 2075/76, the company processed a total of 11,755,072 cheques through NCHL-ECC system; 4,931,950 transactions through NCHL-IPS system; and 186,041 transactions through connect IPS e-Payment system. The total settlement value of the transactions processed through NCHL systems during the fiscal year remained at Rs 9.2 Trillions. It handled daily average transactions of over 67,479 equivalents to Rs 36.85 Billions on daily settlement value. There are almost 80 banks and financial institutions as its direct members with access to over 5,003 bank branches within NCHL's system network. NCHL has also enrolled over 22 non-bank institutions as indirect/technical members.

Himalaya Airlines adds connection to Central China by commencing flights from Kathmandu to Changsha



Himalaya Airlines, a Nepal-China joint venture international airline, launched their service connecting Kathmandu to Changsha, the capital of central China's Hunan province on November 20. As the airlines company is exploring new markets before the onset of VNY 2020, it aims at promoting and capturing the outbound tourism potential of the province into Nepal. With the new service, Nepalis will have a convenient, economical and direct connection to explore this new destination in China.

Right after Guiyang, Himalaya introduced their newest flight route between Kathmandu and Changsha. Attracting numerous tourists towards the city every year, Changsha is one of the major tourist cities of the country. Himalaya flies every Wednesday from Kathmandu to Changsha and back; Himalaya is the only airline operating direct flights between the two cities.

The maiden flight departed from Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) at local time 11:03am on November 20 and touched down Changsha Huanghua International Airport (CSX) at local time 5:19pm. The return flight departed from CSX at local time 6:28pm and touched down TIA at 9:23pm local time on the same day.

"Apart from Beijing and Guiyang, we believe Kathmandu needs more connectivity to other cities of China; in order to take optimum advantage of China's travel potential. We are very happy to add yet another route in China to strengthen the Nepal-China

connectivity. With these newly added routes, we are deepening our trans-border network by providing key links for business and leisure travellers of both China and Nepal," said Vijay Shrestha, Vice President-Administration of Himalaya Airlines.

Study Adelaide announces 2020 Brand Ambassador Programme



Study Adelaide, an agency of the Government of South Australia to promote Adelaide as an international study destination, launched an Ambassador competition for students in Nepal for the first time on November 4. The competition offers an opportunity for student to become ambassadors of Adelaide as well as offers an education and lifestyle experiential tour of Adelaide. Applications for Ambassador for Adelaide program closes on December 31 and interested students can apply at www.studyadelaide.com/southasia

The competition offers winning candidates a support package valued at AUD \$5,000 per student that includes airfares, living allowance and free access to key Adelaide festivals and events, allowing students to soak up the full educational and lifestyle experience of the city. The ambassadors will be encouraged to engage with friends, family and the community to showcase Adelaide's advantages and what makes it one of the best Australian cities for international students by sharing their story through posts, videos and blogs. Fifteen winners will be chosen across four South Asian countries including India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Nabil Bank launches Heroes of Nepal series



Nabil Bank launched Heroes of Nepal series with the objective of recognising and felicitating Nepalis who have achieved extraordinary feats. The purpose behind the Heroes of Nepal series is to highlight and learn from the life journeys of exceptional Nepalis. In an event organised at the Rastriya Sabha Griha on November 15, Nabil Bank initiated the Heroes of Nepal series by felicitating Nirmal Purja, popularly known as Nims Dai, for setting a world record of climbing the world's 14 highest peaks within seven months. At the event Purja shared not only the adventures of his 14 historic summit ascents, but also the challenges of his journey.

Qatar Airways and IndiGo sign code share agreement

Qatar Airways signed a code share agreement with IndiGo on November 7 with the first code share flights to operate from December 18. This agreement will enable the airline to place its code on IndiGo flights between Doha and Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad and is the first step in strengthening cooperation between the two airlines companies.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, Akbar Al Baker, said, "We are extremely proud to secure this strategic partnership with IndiGo, the largest airline in one of the world's fastest growing aviation markets. We believe this agreement will be just the first step in strengthening our relationship and we very much look forward to working together to harness our complementary strengths and resources to enhance the travel experience for our passengers around the world."

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Genese to provide Cloud Computing Training and Certification to students



Genese Solution, a company specialising in the cloud computing ecosystem and web and software development, has signed strategic partnership agreements with four Kathmandu-based colleges to provide cloud computing training and certification to their students. Niranjana Udas, Educate Program Lead of Genese Cloud Academy (GCA), the education wing of Genese Solution, signed MoUs with Nava Raj Heka, Academic Director of National College, Niranjana Khakurel, Principal of National College of Information Technology (NCIT), Pradeep Pant, Director of Virinchi College, and Bhes Raj Pokhrel, CEO of Texas College of Management and IT at a special signing ceremony organised in Kathmandu on November 17.

Genese has recently introduced the popular Amazon Web Service (AWS) Educate programme in Nepal to deliver industry-relevant cloud computing training and access to jobs globally through Amazon's job portal. The above-mentioned colleges are 4 of the 25+ selected academic institutions across different cities of Nepal that Genese is building strategic partnerships to encourage adoption of internationally recognised online training modules like the AWS Educate programme and Microsoft Learn programme to provide a pathway for students and teachers to access tools, courses, and certification on emerging cloud computing subjects.

Using a blended online training and in-person instruction approach, aided

by training of trainers to sustainably upgrade the capacity and standards of the academic institutes, Genese intends to build the work-readiness of graduating students so that they are able to effectively enter and meet the productivity demands of the industry.

The skill training covers job roles such as Application Developer, Cloud Support Engineer, Cloud Support Associate, Cyber Security Specialist, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning Developer, IoT Developer, Digital Marketer, Business Analysts, etc. Students involved in the training will be linked to AWS Educate job portal, giving them access to over 4,000 employers offering freelance and online jobs in the global market.

Talking about the collaboration with these colleges, Niranjana Udas, Educate Program Lead of Genese Solutions shared, "We have seen a substantial number of students who have a degree but don't have proper skills that would place them in IT or IT-enabled companies. Our idea of starting cloud computing education and training in Nepal is to bridge the gap between the industry and academia of Nepal. The teaching model of GCA programme is demand-driven instead of supply-driven, which is achieved by collaborating with the private sector demands. We are collaborating with national and international industry leaders in education, cloud computing, skill development, and entrepreneurship training to produce a work-ready workforce. We are also focused on empowering women and socially disadvantaged groups to uplift our community through IT."

Xiaomi launches Redmi 8 and Redmi 8A in Nepal

Xiaomi launched its two smartphones - Redmi 8 and Redmi 8A - in Nepal on November 11. Redmi 8 is the

latest in the Redmi series line-up and comes with a 12MP dual camera setup. Redmi 8A is the latest in the Redmi A series with improvements on all fronts including an expandable memory of up to 512GB. Both the phones ship with a 5000mAh battery, Qualcomm Snapdragon 439 octa-core chipset, USB Type-C 18W fast charging support, Corning Gorilla Glass 5, and P2i's nano-coating.



Sourabh Kothari, Country General Manager of Xiaomi Nepal, said, "We are thrilled to introduce our all-new Redmi 8 and Redmi 8A to Nepal. As a brand we believe in bringing the best of innovative technology for our customers at an honest pricing. Both smartphones are taking the game to the next level with features such as a huge 5000mAh battery and 18W fast charging support over USB Type-C. With high quality products and great specs such as these, we are positive that our Mi Fans in Nepal have a great experience in store for them."

The phones are available in Sunset Red, Ocean Blue and Midnight Black colour variants. The Redmi 8A 2GB+32GB is priced at Rs 11,999 and the 3GB+32GB is priced at Rs 12,999. The 4GB+64GB variant of Redmi 8 is available for Rs 14,999 in Onyx Black, Ruby Red and Sapphire Blue colours.

Shaping Agile Governance

The Global Shapers Community Kathmandu Hub hosted their third Shape Talk event in the capital on November 8. The panel discussed 'Agile Governance', especially in the context of emerging businesses, saw 130 participants. Ashutosh Tiwari, Founder and Managing

Director of Safal Partners, Sakar Pudasaini, Founder of Karkhana, Shilshila Acharya, CEO of Himalayan Climate Initiative and Shabda Gyawali, Investment Director of Dolma Impact Fund were the panelists.

Book launch of Dr Pradhuma Raj Pandey and Dr Namrata Pandey



After the grand success of their spiritual essay collection, Aphno Kitab, the couple Dr Namrata Pandey and Dr Pradhuma Raj Pandey have jointly launched another book Rahasya, Jeevan Ra Prem. They launched the new book on November 16 in the presence of chief guest Satya Mohan Joshi and special guest Kulman Ghising, Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority. At the same event, Dr Namrata Pandey also launched her solo book Urja, a collection of essays that were published between 2070 BS to 2076 BS in the various newspapers and journals.

Allotment of 10% Laxmi Bank Debentures 2086 completed

The allotment of 10% Laxmi Bank Debentures 2086 has been completed on November 17. The issue of Rs 2 Billion, managed by Nabil Investment Banking, was fully subscribed. Out of the total issued 2,000,000 units, 265 applicants out of public portion were allotted 79,996 units while 23 applicants were allotted the remaining 1,920,004 units through private placement model. The issue of the debentures was open from October 10 to November 8. The allotment was completed at a program held on November 17 at Laxmi Bank's head office in Kathmandu.



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Citizen Life Insurance joins NCHL



Citizen Life Insurance Company signed an agreement with Nepal Clearing House Ltd (NCHL) for automating its various payments related processes including disbursements and collections through NCHL payment systems. The agreement was signed by Poshak Raj Paudel, CEO of Citizen Life Insurance and Neelesh Man Singh Pradhan, CEO of NCHL on November 13. With this, Citizen Life will directly integrate its system(s) with NCHL-IPS and connect IPS e-Payment systems enabling the insurance company to process the disbursements like agent commission, salary payment, vendor payments and investment placements. Once the system comes into operations, the policy holders of Citizen Life will also be able to pay their premium online through connect IPS e-Payment or any of the bank branches. All such transactions will be processed directly through the bank accounts of the insurance company and the beneficiaries/customers.

I-Cube Investors Meetup at Nepal Communitere



I-Cube Investors Meetup was organised on November 22 at Nepal Communitere. Two of their innovative start-ups that are seeking angel funding were introduced. The two start-ups are Antidote Nepal, a formal clothing rental business and

Ecoorb Initiatives, producers of elephant dung paper. They pitched their ideas in front of potential investors.

Nepal Communitere supports Nepali start-ups through a year-long business incubation program called I-Cube which represents the three pillars to startup success: Innovate, Iterate and Incubate. In their inaugural year, I-Cube raised 33 lakhs engaging 22 investors to support two incubated startups.

NCHL receives SAFA BPA Award

Nepal Clearing House has been awarded with "Certificate of Merit" for the year 2018 in the category Public Sector Entities under 'SAFA Best Presented Annual Report Awards'. The award is conferred on the basis of the evaluation administered by South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA) committee for Improvement in Transparency, Accountability and Governance, of the published annual reports from South Asian Countries. The award was distributed by SAFA at a ceremony on November 30 at Dhaka, Bangladesh. The NCHL's annual report and disclosures was earlier recognised by the Institutes of Chartered Accountants of Nepal (ICAN) for BPA award in Nepal as the 1st runner-up. And then the annual report was forwarded to SAFA by ICAN for the award evaluation within the SAARC region. NCHL considers the award as a recognition of its efforts within the industry and its demonstrated commitment towards financial disclosures and transparencies.

Global IME Bank convenes 13th AGM endorsing 25.5% dividend

Global IME Bank has convened its 13th AGM on November 18 endorsing 25.5% dividend; 12.75% bonus shares and 12.75% cash dividend to its shareholders. The bank had earned Rs 2.78 billion in

the fiscal year 2075-76 as per the audited financial reports. Following the capitalisation of bonus shares, bank's paid up capital shall rise to Rs 11.76 billion. The AGM also endorsed the ongoing merger process with Janata Bank following which the bank shall now approach Nepal Rastra Bank seeking its final permission for joint operation. The AGM also allowed the bank to increase the authorised capital of the bank to Rs 25 billion from existing Rs 16 billion. Both the banks had signed final merger agreement on October 25 following which Chandra Prasad Dhakal will continue as the Chairman of the new institution, Parshuram Kunwor Chhetri as CEO, Mahesh Sharma Dhakal as Senior Dy CEO with five BoDs from former Global and two BoDs from former Janata Bank. Following the merger, the new

bank will have about Rs 19 billion in paid up capital, more than Rs 2.10 hundred billion in deposit collection and around Rs 2 hundred billion as loan disbursement, more than 300 banking centres and more than 3200 employees.

Global IME Bank opens new branches

Global IME Bank has brought into operation its 149th branch at Siddhicharan Gaupalika-11 Ramailo Dada Bazar of Okhaldhunga on November 6. It also brought into operation its 150th branch at Bandipur Gaupalika-2 Bandipur of Tanahun district from November 11. The bank now has 149 branches, 30 extension and revenue collection counters, 150 ATM terminals, 193 branchless banking units and 3 foreign relation offices under its growing network.



Laxmi Commercial Vehicles launches new Global Series Truck and Tipper

Laxmi Commercial Vehicles, formerly known as Goldfish International, has opened a SML ISUZU Flagship Service Center and launched new Global Series truck and tipper on November 21. The company inaugurated a SML ISUZU flagship 3s service center in the name of GFI Services Kathmandu at Gurjadhara, Naikap which spans around an area of 100,000 sq. ft consisting separate wing for sales, service, spare parts, PDI center and stock yard. This 3S centre is well equipped with latest equipment for vehicle repairs, adequate qualified technicians and experienced engineers. At the event, the company also unveiled new Global Series truck and tipper based on the ISUZU design philosophy named as "Global Series". The new truck and tipper have adopted ISUZU's global experience and Japanese technology making them fuel efficient, comfortable, drivable, reliable, durable and optimum loading capable.

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NIBL 16th Extension Counter at KUSOM



Nepal Investment Bank has extended its services through its 16th Extension Counter in Kathmandu University School of Management (KUSOM) in Balkumari, Lalitpur. The latest facility was jointly inaugurated by CEO of the bank Jyoti Prakash Pandey, Registrar of the Kathmandu University Prof Dr Subodh Sharma and Dean of KUSOM Prof Dr Bijay K.C at a program held on November 14. "The establishment of this extension counter at Kathmandu University premises reveals the importance of the long partnership between the two institutions. It is believed that this counter shall enhance the coordination between the two institutions to provide customized financial services to the staff, students and faculty members," reads the press statement from the bank.

Laxmi Bank Open Golf Tournament 2019

Laxmi Bank hosted Laxmi Bank Open Golf Tournament 2019 at the Gleneagles designed Gokarna Golf Club on November 9. This was the sixth edition of the annual tournament which started in 2014 and is a major event in the amateur golf calendar in the country.

The tournament was played on stable ford format with $\frac{3}{4}$ handicap allowance. More than 100 male and female golfers including seniors of age 60 and above and juniors of age 17 and under vied for the trophy in various categories.

Global IME Bank signs agreement with Qatar Airways to provide discount to bank customers

Global IME Bank and Qatar Airways inked an agreement under which the card users of the bank will now receive 7% discount while making their flight booking with Doha based carrier. The agreement towards that effect was signed between Marketing and Business Promotion Head of the Bank Shanta Shivakoti and Country Manager of Qatar Airways Mohammad L. Imam.

Consumer Behaviour towards Life Insurance by Rooster Logic



From a survey conducted and published by Rooster Logic on 'Consumer Behaviour towards Life Insurance', has found that 75% of respondents were aware of life insurance policies but only two out of ten respondents said that they own a life insurance policy. The survey also revealed that 55% of respondents were not asked to subscribe to any life insurance schemes and only half of the respondents were open to own life insurance if few key services were provided with their bank accounts. In terms of expectation of key services, 91% of respondents expects clear premium automatically, 45% wants life insurance policy to be obligatory, 98% wish for automatic claim transfer, 86% wants seamless draw and deposit of life insurance and 77% of respondents desire periodic interest from life insurance. The survey was published for the month of November 2019.

IME General Insurance appoints Sharan Regmi as Dy CEO

IME General Insurance has appointed its Dy MD Sharan Regmi as the new Dy CEO on November 26. Regmi has 27 years of experience with several financial institutions and more importantly with several non-life insurance companies, says the media statement.

Agni Group opens Mahindra Tractor 3S setup in Biratnagar



Agni Group opened a new Tractor 3S setup of Mahindra Tractor at Bargaachhi, Biratnagar on November 27. The new tractor showroom and workshop was jointly inaugurated by Director of Agni Inc, Cabinet Shrestha, Country Head of M&M for Nepal Chaitanya Kagalkar and Senior Marketing Manager International Operation M&M Aakanshya Banshal. Also present were Pravash Man Shakya, Deputy General Manager of Tractor Department, Agni Inc and Branch Manager Vijay Kumar Deo. According to Pravash Man Shakya, Deputy General Manager of Tractor Department, Agni Inc., the company is focused on providing a wide range of product as per customers need and consistent quality service for gaining optimum customer satisfaction at all Mahindra outlets. This 3s setup will be dedicated to providing sale service and spare parts of all product range of Mahindra tractors and provide 24-hour service to the customers.

Everest Bank installs crematorium at Swargadwari Ghat, Bhairahawa



Everest Bank has installed energy efficient and eco-friendly cremation system at Swargadwari Ghat, Bhairahawa. The machine has heat recovery system and reflector to utilise waste heat and minimise cremation duration; this will save more than 250 kgs of wood per cremation. The system helps control pollution as the smoke is passed through wet scrubber to remove hazardous air pollutants and toxins before releasing into the atmosphere. The machine was handed over to Siddhartha Nagar Municipality, Bhairahawa in the presence of Chief Minister Shankar Pokharel, Deputy Mayor Uma Kafle and ward representatives of Siddhartha Nagar Municipality, Bhairahawa. The handing over was done by Sh. GK Negi, CEO Everest Bank.



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Janata Bank provides support of Rs 10 lakhs to Central Deaf College



Janata Bank, under its CSR initiative, provided financial support of Rs 10 lakhs to Central Deaf College of Naxal. The amount was handed over by CEO of the bank Parshuram Kunwar Chhetri to the Head of Campus Management, Dr. Prabha Hamal at a program on November 7.

IME Literature Festival Janakpur edition

The Janakpur edition of Nepal Literature Festival started in Janakpur was held from November 8. Nepal's former President Dr Ram Baran Yadav chaired the inauguration ceremony. The opening day saw speeches by several notable personalities including author and critic Hari Sharma, Janakpur based journalist Anil Mishra and Province 2 coordinator of Visit Nepal Year 2020, Manish Jha.

The second day of the festival saw several panel discussions on topics ranging from Chure range to Madhesi food culture and literature to the Tarai-Hill political dynamic. The panel titled 'Chure ko chinta' was discussed between Yadav, Journalist Chandra Kishore and former Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal. The panel 'Madhes ko Himal' had journalist Kanak Mani Dixit, Biraj Bhakta Shrestha, Dr Ram Dayal Rakesh and Dharendra Premarshi in discussion. Pradesh wa para desh saw Editor-in-Chief of Kantipur daily Sudheer Sharma in conversation with the Chief Minister of Province 2, Lal Babu Raut.

Madhes ko Bhojan saw Kedar Sharma, Imtiaz Wafa, Gayatri Sharma and Gani Ansari in discussion.

Adhyatma ko Rajdhani had Charu Chadha, Ramashis Yadav and Nityananda Mandal. Kasto Sahitya Kasko Sahitya saw Brajesh Khanal, Ram Bharos Kapadi, Anbika Giri and Manu Manjil. The panel titled Swabhimana, samman ra abhiman had Narayan Wagle, Dipendra Jha and Gagan Thapa.

Watch Pulsar Dare Venture IV on AP1 HD

Hansraj Hulaschand & Co, the authorised distributor of Bajaj motorcycles, is back with fourth season of Pulsar Dare Venture refreshed by Sprite. Pulsar Dare Venture IV has been going live on AP1 HD television channel every Saturday at 9 pm from November 16. Pulsar Dare Venture is one of the most popular adventure biking reality shows in Nepal and for the first time Pulsar Dare venture IV has crossed the international boundary taking 12 daring and fearless riders all the way to Ladakh which a dream destination for riders.

The riders showcase their biking skills and talents experiencing unlimited thrill throughout the journey. Besides the thrill and experience of going beyond borders, the winner will receive a cash amount of Rs 10 lakhs and a brand new Pulsar NS 200. Pulsar Dare Venture had successfully completed three seasons in 2014, 2015 and 2017.

OYO unveils first television campaign in Nepal

OYO Hotels and Homes unveiled its first television campaign with two engaging videos for viewers and guests in Nepal on November 12. Shot on the theme of "OYO, Rahanus Bindas", the television commercials highlight OYO's strong presence and easy access to standardised accommodation for tourists and guests in the country. The videos feature actress Barsha

Raut and her husband actor Sanjog Koirala each leading a separate TVC which are shot in Nepali with English subtitles catering to a wider audience.

Both the videos end with the message "No matter where you go there is always an OYO". Commenting on the launch, Weekly Yolmo, Country Head of OYO Nepal said, "We are excited to unveil our first



television campaign for Nepal. These videos highlight our true value proposition for travelers - no matter wherever you are in Nepal you are never far from an OYO. All our hotels offer standardised and comfortable experience to guests which can be easily booked by the OYO mobile app. We are overwhelmed by the response received from our guests and will continue to deliver value-driven hospitality to both local and international travellers as we support the government's vision of promoting tourism in the country with Visit Nepal 2020."

Amplifying its social media outreach to travellers, OYO would also be releasing two video blogs across all platforms, including YouTube, Facebook and Instagram.

Top Cardiologist Rajneesh Kapoor to nurture Nepali Heart Health Advocates

Dr Rajneesh Kapoor, Vice Chairman of Medanta Hospital India, addressed the launch of Heart Health Advocacy drive in Nepal at a press conference held on November 18 at Hotel Ambassador, Kathmandu. The drive, a first of its kind initiative, targets to help reduce heart disease burden in Nepal by the influence of well-trained heart health advocates. He said that reinforcement of healthcare awareness has a profound role in bringing change in public

outlook and the strategy is to use it for the purpose of heart health awareness. The program is designed to train health enthusiasts on matters of heart health and authorise them as centre points for heart patients in need. He highlighted, "Cardiovascular disease accounts for 18% of all deaths in Nepal and as much as 80% of them can be prevented with lifestyle changes and treating heart patients with use of latest technology." Through the drive, people in Nepal can have faster and no cost access to latest information, virtual heart clinics, preventive healthcare strategies, community programs. It will be a collaboration of medical and non-medical people, working towards common objective of protecting heart health.

According to World Health Organisation Cardiovascular disease accounts for 31% of all deaths globally, of these deaths 85% are from heart attack and stroke. Most cardiovascular diseases can be prevented by addressing behavioural risk factors such as tobacco use, unhealthy diet and obesity, physical inactivity and harmful use of alcohol using population-wide strategies.

Sarangi Soirée at Maya Manor

Maya Manor launched a weekly event Sarangi Soirée on November 16. Every week the hotel will invite Anugraha, a local artisan band from the marginalised Gandharva community to play traditional Nepali music with traditional Nepali instruments, Sarangi being one of them. Gandharva is a nomadic musician caste that used to spread news through songs but have suffered caste based discrimination. By inviting them weekly, the hotel hopes to support this community and their trade.



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Chimney lighting ceremony at Hotel Yak & Yeti



On November 15, the spirit of Chimney was rekindled at Hotel Yak & Yeti. The years old tradition of lighting the famous copper chimney takes place in mid November and also signifies the onset of winter in Kathmandu.

This year the chimney was lit by H.E. Aleksei Novikov, Ambassador of Russia to Nepal. Seated in the quaint palatial wing of the hotel's edifice, the Chimney Restaurant was relaunched on October 13, 2018, with new menus and an extended outdoor terrace seating in the lush gardens of Hotel Yak & Yeti.

Everest Bank handovers Hemodialysis Machine to Manipal Hospital



Under its CSR Program, Everest Bank handed over one unit of Hemodialysis machine to Manipal Hospital which will help to reduce the waiting time for kidney patients. EBL has been organising various social programs for the benefit of the people at large and has always focused on customer benefit and satisfaction with its theme 'Service with Smile'. The machine was handed over to the Dean of Manipal Hospital BM Nagpal by Rajiv Jain, DGM Everest Bank in the presence of

Col. A. Chambial SM Defence Attache, Embassy of India, and various other officials of Pension Paying Office, Pokhara and Manipal Hospital.

Ncell Mela 2019 in six cities



Ncell announced on November 27 that the company will organise Ncell Mela 2019 in six different cities of the country. The mela will be organised in Itahari, Birtamode, Janakpur, Birgunj, Dhangadhi and Butwal. The mela is being organised as a part of the company's bigger brand promise 'Today. Tomorrow. Together' and also aims to promote domestic tourism, supporting Visit Nepal 2020. This journey of the one-day music, food, and fun-filled Ncell Mela will start on December 14 from Itahari in the East. In all the six cities, the fair will kick start at 10am and continue till 7pm. Entry will be free and visitors can also win exciting prizes in game stalls. Ncell customers in the mela can subscribe to various exciting offers and even upgrade their SIM to 4G compatible USIM by submitting necessary documents on the spot. Customers can dial 17133 and get more information about the mela.

Amnesty International Nepal launches Write for Rights 2019 campaign

Amnesty International Nepal launched the Write for Rights 2019 campaign, Amnesty's annual letter-writing campaign, whereby supporters worldwide write letters for people whose rights are under threat or are being violated on November 28. The Write for Rights campaign will run from November 28 to December 20. This year Amnesty



Turkish Airlines Kathmandu celebrates its 6th anniversary

Turkish Airlines Kathmandu celebrated its 6th year anniversary at Gokarna Forest Resort on November 23. The event included exciting games like destination selfie game, treasure hunt, golf etc. Grand prizes for the games included business class and economy roundtrip ticket to any Turkish Airlines destination, package tours to Baku/Turkey, dinner /lunch vouchers from various hotels in Kathmandu etc. A Flying Chef all the way from Turkey greeted the guests with the delicacies of Turkey ranging from baklava to sarma. The event consisted of guests from various sectors of the industry ranging from corporates, embassy houses, frequent flyers, travel agencies and media houses.

International is throwing its might behind the children and young people who are fighting some of the world's biggest crises. Many have stepped in where adults have failed to lead and are facing terrible danger as a result. Write for Rights 2019 will see Amnesty supporters stand in solidarity with young individuals from Belarus, Canada, China, Egypt, Greece, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines and South Sudan.

Among others, Amnesty International Nepal is campaigning for Yasaman Aryani, a young Iranian activist, who was sentenced to 16 years in prison for defying the country's forced veiling laws; Sarah Mardini and Sean Binder, two humanitarian workers, who were charged with 'people smuggling' by Greek authorities for participating in a rescue operation of refugees and are now facing up to 25 years in prison, and 17-year-old Magai Matio Ngong of South Sudan,

who was sentenced to death in November 2017 while still a child, in contravention of both South Sudanese law and international law.

Additionally, as part of its "Violence against Women" campaign, Amnesty Nepal supporters will also collect petitions demanding the Nepali government implement the 2017 Supreme Court order on regulating sale of acid. The petitions will be delivered to Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa.

"Incidents of acid attacks, which mainly target young girls, have been on the rise in the country. It's time for the government to take this issue seriously and regulating the sale and distribution of acids which are currently easily available in the market can be a good first step," said Nirajan Thapaliya, Executive Director of Amnesty International Nepal.

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“THROUGH MY 18-YEAR CAREER, I HAVE BEEN OFFERED LUCRATIVE JOBS FREQUENTLY BUT I DECIDED TO GROW MY ROOTS IN DIGITAL THEATRE MARKETING.”



Bibek Binod Pokharel
Managing Director, Linez Marketing

Bibek Binod Pokharel is the Managing Director of Linez Marketing which he joined in 2003 as an Executive. Today he is a partner in the company with a team of 20 plus people and representatives spread across the country.

His urge to be financially independent began right after he completed his SLC examinations. He began working as a tutor, ventured into desktop publishing and in 1998, even started a computer institute. Pokharel has diverse creative interests which include a television show he initiated called 'Public Hearing' that received the highest TRP in the country. It was this tryst with television which marked the direction for a career in marketing.

In this edition of **B360**, Bibek Binod Pokharel shares with **Ankita Jain** the five major highlights of his life and career which shape his present.

Personal and professional inspirations

My father inspired me in every way. And professionally QFX Board of Director, Nakim Uddin taught me the basics of digital theatre marketing. I learnt a lot from him. Another person who inspired me to become an entrepreneur is Sulav Budhathoki, Chairman of the Innovate Nepal Group.

Linez & QFX

I belong to a middle-class family where no one ever had a business oriented mindset. In 2003, I joined Linez as an employee and today I am the Managing Director of the company. When I joined Linez and started working with QFX, my life took a sharp turn. I was only 22 years old



then. I am student of finance but marketing interested me. I taught myself the marketing know-hows, one lesson at a time. It was my passion and interest in marketing that has helped shape my career and made me reach where I am today.

Digital Theatre Marketing

We are one of the pioneers in digital theatre marketing in the country. Only limited companies are offering full-fledged marketing services here. Also, there is a dearth of professionals in this field. Sales professionals are in abundance but when it comes to marketing, it does not enjoy the same luxury. People need to be groomed for this job profile. We have been in this business since the inception of QFX in the country which made possible our more than 90% market share in digital theatre marketing. With QFX, we are

expanding and the growth has been enormous over the years. With the introduction of QFX in Civil Mall in 2011, digital theatre marketing escalated. Simultaneously, the quality of advertisements in the theatre also improved. I still remember the first movie which released in Civil Mall was Dabbang, a Bollywood film. And when I witnessed the projection quality of the film, I was sure that the marketing business from now onwards would boom. And it did. There has been no looking back after that.

Dedication & Patience

Since a young age, I have proved my commitment to any work that I am assigned to. I still remember managing my sister's entire wedding when I was just 14 years old. Today this practice is widely known as event management. Dedication to work is something that has been inculcated in me since

childhood and it has remained with me.

When it comes to the entertainment business, theatre rules the market. There were days when I pitched for one advertisement at a time and today the market has ballooned to a 25-30 crore business per annum. Success in my line of business was possible largely to the values I held dear. Through my 18-year career, I have been offered lucrative jobs frequently but I decided to grow my roots in digital theatre marketing. I believe that when I change myself, the world around will change eventually.

A will to introduce new elements in the market

Digital theatre marketing was a new thing when we started. Even today, I am eager to introduce new elements in the market. Along with my team, we keep brainstorming about the 'big' next. Similarly,

we were the first ones to introduce Google advertisement nine years ago but our effort was labeled 'too early for the market' then. Also, we came up with digital marketing eight years back. During that time, people were hesitant to spend money on digital platforms. Today, the same people allot a separate budget for digital marketing.

Talking about marketing, the market size the country offers is not sufficient. Because of this factor, many ideas fail. We compare the market with neighbouring countries but do not realise that the market in these countries is 100 times bigger. Currently, we are expanding on digital marketing. **B**

THE POWER OF BODY AWARENESS



Sandesh Palungwa Limbu, Certified professional fitness instructor, founder of RAGE Fitness, and specialises in mixed martial arts.

In a highly stressed world where even things we do to enjoy and relax are filled with external stimuli, you often hear recommendations of meditation, deep breathing, yoga, exercise and other methods. Often you are also told to listen to your body. I find that people are happy to read and talk about these practices but fail to really make it a part of their daily lives. Additionally, doing things to tick it off your list does not really result in wellbeing. If you are sitting or your meditation practice and your mind is on something else that you really want to do or need, you'll defeat the purpose and create more anxiety inside.

The main precursor to stress is your environment, your body and your thoughts. Whether it is everyday traffic or a deadline to meet, whether it is a physical ailment or an ageing process, whether it is negativity, anxiety or an emotional break up, stress is an everyday occurrence, and it can lead to an incredible number of diseases in the body.

It is something you have to adjust to. It is not something that you can avoid completely in life. But what you can do is to learn to change and balance your reaction and response to stress.

One of the simplest techniques that inevitably works is what I call ORA: Observation, Relaxation, Awareness. Observation is applying all your

senses to absorb the stimulus in detail. It requires focus and attention to take mental notes. Relaxation is your ability to let loose, release tension and tightness, and open up. Awareness is simply knowing and realising the sensation at hand. For example you can be aware of the sensations of feeling sleepy or hungry.

ORA is a simple yet very effective relaxation and awareness technique which will enhance your ability to focus, de-stress, centralise, recharge and free your flow of energy. To start the process all you need is readiness through self-willingness and clear intention to commit to the practice. You also need a quiet area where you are comfortable and will not be interrupted or disturbed.



To prepare

While performing ORA make sure not to apply any forced effort. It has to be effortless effort. Relax and loosen your entire body and remain completely still for the duration of this practice. Ensure that you are breathing easily and comfortably, and try to find your natural rhythm of breath. The method requires you to shift your attention to a particular area of the body to observe. Relax the area and become aware of the whole process.

Similarly work with all the areas in the given order.

Process

Lie down on the floor facing upwards. Your feet should be shoulder width apart heels in toes out and hands six to eight inches away on the sides of the hips with palms facing upwards.

Keep your spine in a straight line and relax your shoulder blades. The head should be in a neutral position.

Close your eyes and analyse your entire posture to assume the most comfortable position. Make necessary adjustments if required.

Begin with a few deep breaths; take deep inhalation and long exhalation. This will help you relax and settle the rate and pace of your breath

chest, depression between chest, neck, collar bone shoulder, lower back, middle back, upper back, shoulder blades, trapezius muscle, neck

Shoulder and arms: shoulders, upper arms, elbows, lower arms, wrists, hands and fingers

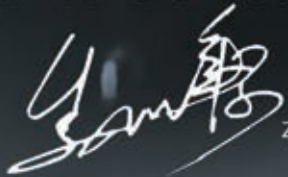
Spine, head and face: spine from the tail bone to the base of the head, head (back, sides, top), forehead, temples, eyebrows, eyelids, eyes, nose, nostrils, cheeks, lips, teeth, tongue, throat, jaws, inner muscles of the mouth, chin, whole face and ears.

At the end become aware of the whole body and try to sense the whole body in a single frame of observation to reach the last point of your relaxed state.

To finish begin to externalise your senses, take few deep breaths, move and fingers and toes gently and slowly open your eyes.

Note: Expect your mind to waver but bring back your focus. With regular practice, your awareness will grow. When you do this regularly, you will be able to differentiate between external and internal awareness. External awareness is the stimulation of the five senses from the outside world whereas internal awareness is what you feel inside your body both on the physical and emotional levels. The reason we need to focus on the internal is because so much of our attention is constantly directed to the outside world and we do not feel the tension inside our bodies until it becomes a state of high discomfort or disease. While this practice is best done as described above, you can also do it in a public place by scanning your body in your mind for tension and gently relaxing it. This is one of the simplest and most effective means of stress reduction, and I encourage you to make it a part of your life today. **B**

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Sadhguru. Named one of 50 most influential people, Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, a bestselling author & poet. Sadhguru has been conferred the "Padma Vibhushan" by the Government of India in 2017, the highest civilian award of the year, accorded for exceptional and distinguished service.

This happened in a Sunday school in Alabama. An enthusiastic teacher asked the children, "What do you have to do to go to heaven?" Someone said, "Every Sunday, if I clean the church steps, I can go to heaven." Someone else said, "If I help my friend in his examination, I will go to heaven." Each person said something. Then, one little boy was simply sitting nonchalantly on the last bench. So the teacher asked, "Hey, Tommy. What do you think you have to do to go to heaven?" He said, "You got to die first."

There aren't many points. Don't go by readymade points because we don't know what the ground reality is. If you are talking about a business rebirth, to drop something that has failed is easy and inevitable. It will anyway happen. But to drop something that is successful and recreate something else out of that needs vision, courage and a certain level of madness in you. It is a completely different level of looking at life. You must be able to see something that others don't see. Only then will you be able to do this. So, you should sharpen your ability to see. Leadership is a kind of perch. Once you get onto a perch, you are supposed to see better than other people. If you don't see any

better, you will become an object of ridicule.

Are You Willing to Die?

What you need to look at is whether you are capable of dropping what you are right now – either as an individual or as an organisation. And whether you want to die entirely and recreate something or do you want to die partially and recreate it is a judgment one has to make on the spot, knowing the realities of the situation.



Think Before You Jump

Once we have chosen to be reborn – to dissolve something and create something fresh – many possibilities will be open. Many possibilities always means trouble. To be able to identify which one of these possibilities you should go with is a certain exercise. The problem is people jump into something and then exercise their mind – no. Before you jump into something, it needs to be looked at with enough attention because once you jump into something, there should be no looking back. If you are constantly looking at the rearview mirror, you are not going to go forward.

Don't Worry About Doing the Best Thing

And you must understand, the path you jump into is not the best thing. You can never do the best thing in the world. Whatever you jump into, if you really put your life into it, it can become a great thing. Don't ever try to do the best thing because

if you try to do the best thing, you will waste your life trying to be better than someone else. That's not a good way to go because for all you know the person you compare yourself with may be lame, and you think you are a champion because you run a little faster than him. Whether you are better or worse than someone should not even be a thought in your mind. The only thing to look at is that full utilisation of who you are should happen. Whatever you have,

after tomorrow exist right now? No. So, in other words, you are suffering that which does not exist. That's called insanity. People say, "This is human nature." This is not human nature. This is the nature of people who have not taken charge of human nature.

The human mechanism is the most complex piece of machinery on the planet. This is a "super-supercomputer." But have you read the user's manual? Right now, you are somehow using it. If you do things "somehow", life will happen accidentally.

Look at Everything Fresh

You said "rebirth". If you are born fresh, that means you have no conclusions about anything. You are willing to look at everything like you are just born. If you do this, you will walk through life untouched. Even a little child starts thinking he knows within a few days. Once you think you know, you start fumbling and bumbling. If, every moment of your life, you look at everything like you were just born, you will see everything crystal clear. When you see things clear, you walk through situations comfortably.

Leadership essentially means that every thought or emotion you generate, every action you perform, impacts millions of people. When you have such a privilege, it is important that you keep yourself in really good shape – not just physically but in every other way. If you are in business or are handling the lives, wellbeing and future of many people, it is very important that you work upon yourself. If you understand that the work you are doing is important, who you are needs to be worked at continuously – not just increasing your knowledge or studying at a university, but enhancing this piece of life that you refer to as "myself" to the highest possible level. **B**



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TOP PICK



Pankaj Jhunjunwala

Proprietor, Watch Gallery

Pankaj Jhunjunwala is the proprietor of the Watch Gallery. Jhunjunwala's family was always in the luxury horology business which has given him a detailed understanding of the luxe market. Today, he has expanded the business from watches to high fashion Bally, luxe crystal decor and more. In this issue of **B360**, Pankaj Jhunjunwala shares his list of top brands.

Favourite shopping destination

Shopping is not my thing. My wife does all the shopping. It would be correct to say that her favourite shopping destination is Dubai Mall, Dubai.

Vehicle

Renault Duster



Gadget

Undoubtedly, my MacBook Pro Touch Bar

Eating Out

Farzi Café in New Delhi and Nilgiri Thakali in Kathmandu

I walk on

Bally sneakers. I am obsessed with the legacy, comfort and quality.



Shades

Mont Blanc

I smell of

Calvin Klein One

On your wrist

Being in the luxury watch business, I have a huge personal collection. Currently, my obsession is Bomberg Bolt-68 Racing watch.



Travel Destination

Switzerland is my go-to destination. Exploring Japan is on my bucket list.

Playlist

Metallica when alone; else my 5-year-old decides.

Could watch this movie again and again

Fight Club, 1999 starring Brad Pitt, Edward Norton, and Helena Bonham Carter

Alcohol

Ardbeg Single Malt



Favourite app

I am currently hooked to Seesaw following my daughter's creativity from school.

Most visited website

LinkedIn - connecting with like-minded people.

Greatest indulgence

Turophile as they call it; I love to indulge in different varieties of cheese.



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“LEADERSHIP IS A PASSIONATE PATH WHICH INVOLVES LEADERS MOVING PAST CHALLENGES AND INSPIRING PEOPLE AROUND THEM”



YULIA KOIRALA
FOUNDER & DIRECTOR, SUSHILA ARTS ACADEMY

Yulia Koirala is the Founder and Director of Sushila Arts Academy. She studied at an intensive music school learning everything from music to theory to classics during her childhood and later graduated with honours earning many well-merited national awards for her piano playing skills. Later, she shifted gear from music to business management and completed her MBA from Moscow University.

The idea of opening SAA came to her when she took

her year old daughter to a big children's theatre production in Russia. "My daughter loved it so much that she climbed on the stage, was enjoying the decorations, and didn't want to come off the stage," she recalls. Koirala came back to Nepal and explored what Kathmandu has to offer for kids in terms of music, art, dance and theatre activities, but was disheartened to find very few and limited options.

She muses, "I considered it a calling... to do something

about it, to have taken the initiative and opened a school for such activities." SAA started out very small and Koirala wasn't sure how things would work out. But, she dedicated her heart and soul into developing SAA and it grew into an arts academy.

SAA currently runs four different faculties under its umbrella: music, dance, art, and theatre. It has a ballet school with a certified program and specified curriculum. The academy also holds

regular exams and provides 90 scholarships annually to talented, committed, underprivileged or financially limited Nepali children.

Through SAA, Koirala wants to uplift arts in Nepal to a higher standard as well as improve and create international standards of shows.

Dibesh Dangol of **B360** interviewed Yulia Koirala to gain insight into her experience as a leader and her thoughts on leadership. **Excerpts:**

What do you think are the three basic traits that a leader should possess? What is your definition of leadership?

Vision, persistence and passion. Obstacles come all the time but a leader shouldn't give up; rather have the strength to lead people. It's not about calculating outcome and expected results, it's something beyond that. When leaders have that and share it with the people they work with, normally the employees or team members follow the leader.

Leadership is a passionate path which involves leaders moving past challenges and inspiring people around them. It is mainly about the vision that a leader provides to the team.

What motivates you in your work?

I love what I am doing and don't consider this as work. I enjoy all the elements like concerts, shows and art exhibitions. I take pleasure in the creative part, touching people's hearts and souls and making them feel alive. I think all forms of arts make us alive and human especially in today's world dominated by technology which pushes people towards the virtual world.

What are the challenges you have faced in leadership roles?

There have been many challenges. I felt the first five years of SAA was challenging and there was no smooth path at all. Making people understand the whole concept of arts and its importance was something I had to deal with. Development and growth only happen when there is consistency and mutual understanding. Training my own staff and training teachers about discipline and commitment was another challenge. Nepal doesn't have

an institution where music teachers could learn to become teachers. As a teacher, you need to have so many other qualities rather than just speciality of the subject. While dealing with kids, teachers need to understand psychology. Bina Gurung, a known Montessori educator in Nepal, has been helping me to train my teachers in terms of Montessori education like dealing and connecting with kids, different behaviour patterns and ways to approach them. There are many subtleties that you have to learn and understand. This is still one of the biggest challenges and we need to constantly work on it to elevate our level.

Also, nowadays everyone wants to become known and have celebrity status. If people pursue that, then I think people are in the wrong path. People need to understand that they have to find what they love and devote their mind, soul and body to that first so that they can develop themselves with a professional approach, commitment and hard work. If people focus on this, then whatever they have desired will automatically come to them. So, lots of time and work goes into training youth and making them realise the areas they first need to focus on.

How do you delegate responsibilities?

Most of the teachers have been with me since the establishment of SAA and very few have left us. I believe in building a relationship with my teachers. We operate strongly as a family and team rather than by a hierarchical approach. Once I trust a teacher, I try and support the teacher with exposure, experience, training. We do have some international workshops through cooperation with the Russian Centre of Science and Culture and Indian Cultural Centre. We try and utilise workshop elements to grow on those things. I do send some of my teachers for

courses and further training. Once I have a teacher, I trust that teacher. I do observe them closely in terms of delivery and development, but my teachers have all of my faith, trust and respect.

As for management, I have three members in the core management level.

What would you consider your most significant accomplishment?

I am a person who is never happy with anything. I am very critical of myself and my work. I do hear compliments, appreciation and criticism, all of which I am grateful for, but I really don't dwell on these things. I am quite demanding to myself. I think we have touched the lives of hundreds of kids and youths in a positive way and I consider this to my biggest achievement. One of such many youths is Lucky Darlami who has been my scholar for the last six years and is currently enrolled in a very reputed ballet school -Bangkok City Ballet - in Thailand. Touching youths, making and transforming their lives is what I am proud of.

I think success is measured by people's appreciation, love and respect. Respect and appreciation cannot be bought. I feel success is when people know you or have heard of you, appreciate your work, see the difference you have made in their lives and expresses gratitude. Success is directly proportional to the number of lives you have touched and made better.

Have you been involved in developing innovative solutions or ideas in your sector?

Yes. I think SAA is the first academy with theatre, dance, music and arts all under one umbrella. We came up with musical Broadway shows and big-budget shows in which

we included dance, music and theatre together. Many people have appreciated that ability to raise the level of shows. I think SAA is the only academy which provides so many scholarships as well. That is also something which we started since SAA's establishment. I have many programmes focused on promoting the scholars' talent and giving them the platform.

How do you assess the Arts in Nepal?

It's changing and growing positively. There is a huge difference in this sector when compared to a decade ago and now. I would like to express gratitude to all the sponsors who have come my way and helped me deliver. But, artists are still facing many challenges in Nepal in terms of funding and support from the government. Forms of arts aren't commercial. Normally in any developed country, arts are either funded by the government or rich people who understand its importance. Funding scholarship is a big lack here.

In terms of arts education, the government has to start thinking about creating institutions and focus on teacher training. In Europe, even if you go to simple schools, teachers are not allowed to teach unless the teacher has graduated from a proper institute. So, Nepal needs to move towards that direction. Though we have some international affiliated programmes, this sector hasn't been fully institutionalised or considered to be a major economy and culture developer. **B**

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