



Road to impunity: Oath to Resham Chaudhary

By administering oath of office and secrecy to Resham Chaudhary, who is accused of masterminding the 2015 Tikapur massacre, the government of K P Sharma Oli has made the most serious mistake. On Thursday, the government instructed the jail authorities to take murder-accused Chaudhary, Rastriya Janata Party Nepal (RJP) leader elected to House of Representatives from Kailali, from Dilli Bazar jail to parliament secretariat at Singha Durbar where he took oath of office and secrecy. With this RJP might pressure the government for his unconditional release. Resham Chaudhary is accused of masterminding Tikapur massacre of August 2015 in which seven police personnel and a little child were killed. A case against him is sub-judice in a court. It is no secret that the government was under pressure to administer oath on Chaudhary. RJP, whose support the government enjoys, had made allowing oath to Chaudhary one of their major demands and they had even threatened to resort to street protests if this particular demand was not met. Both RJP and the government should have waited until Chaudhary proved himself innocent or the court declared him so.

Granting oath to Chaudhary is wrong for the following reasons. First, the court has not pronounced him innocent yet and this particular decision might influence the court verdict too. Second, family members of those who were killed on that ill-fated day are still waiting for justice. Their agonies and sufferings can only be imagined. Third, the public report of massacre is yet to come out and it is unclear what actually happened. Fourth, Chaudhary's oath is likely to open the floodgate of pardon for perpetrators of crimes. This could lead to blanket amnesty to criminals who enjoy political backing. Finally, following the massacre, all three major parties of the time—Nepali Congress, CPN-UML and Maoist Center (today's Nepal Communist Party)—had denounced violence and had made public their commitment to bring to book those involved in that heinous massacre. There are records of current prime minister and a number of ministers in his cabinet promising not to spare a single perpetrator. Oli himself had called Tikapur massacre 'an act of terrorism and Chaudhary a criminal.' We wonder what made the ruling party leaders default on their own promise of justice.

The government has made the mockery of law and order by allowing a massacre-accused to take oath of office. It should at least have thought about its repercussions and the dangerous precedent such an act will set. RJP is as much to blame. The party which claims that security forces committed atrocities on their cadres during 2015 protests should have waited for the court verdict. We fear administering oath to murder-accused will also set a bad precedent for cases of rights violations during conflict era. It is obvious that RJP made Chaudhary's oath a bargaining chip to justify the worst crimes and the government made it a tool to ensure continued support from RJP (it could do without it too, for it would still enjoy considerable majority in the parliament even if RJP and Upendra Yadav-led party withdrew their support). Both sides compromised justice for the sake of an individual. Such a blithe response to serious cases will certainly attract international notice and might impel the victims to knock the doors of international courts.



Amrit Banstola

Road safety in Nepal is a social, developmental and a public health issue, but it has not received the attention it deserves. Some incidents get widespread attention because of the number of people who die. Political leaders condemned the mass injuries that occurred in recent road traffic crashes in Nuwakot and Dang (that killed 43 and injured 30), journalists shared the news and the public made it a topic of tea gossip.

Such public awareness of road injuries, however, gradually fades with time, and there may be little further attention until the next fatal traffic crash occurs. Despite the World Health Organisation's estimate that road traffic crashes kill an average of 13 people and injure several others every day in Nepal, neither the government and journalists, nor the public appear to recognize the urgent need for action to save lives from future events.

A recent Global Burden of Diseases report has revealed road traffic injuries as the seventh leading cause of death in Nepal. Further, road traffic injuries kill more than malaria, HIV and TB in Nepal. Above all, any road traffic crash causes either premature deaths or non-fatal injuries with or without disabilities.

Road traffic injuries result in significant emotional distress for families and friends of victims, in addition to the enormous financial costs to individuals, families and nations for the provision of treatment, care and rehabilitation, and with the loss of a workforce through premature death or disability. According to the United Nations Economic and Social Council 2018 report, road traffic crashes cost Nepal 0.8 percent of its GDP—that is Rs 14.58 billion (US\$ 145.82 million) in 2013. These social and economic burdens of road traffic crashes are intolerable.

CRASH NOT 'ACCIDENT'

It is common that newspaper articles report a road traffic event as "accident" or "mishap" and a vehicle involved in a crash as "ill-fated." An accident is an inevitable event. The death toll due to road traffic crash is, however, largely predictable and preventable and is not determined by chance, bad luck or fate of a vehicle. Causes of road crashes on Nepal's road are related

Avoiding road deaths

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to the behavior of drivers (such as speeding, inappropriate overtaking, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or being distracted whilst using a mobile phone), poor road infrastructure, unsafe vehicles, and inadequate enforcement of traffic laws (such as failing to wear seat belts or using a motorcycle helmet). The inadequate availability of post-crash care is often overlooked, but is an important factor in the reasons why people do not survive road traffic crashes in Nepal.

Several proven measures are available that can significantly reduce road traffic deaths and injuries. Raising public awareness about the causes of road crashes and mitigation measures could be a starting point. Police enforcement of drink driving through random breath testing has been a useful measure, which the Government of Nepal should continue. There is a need for a strong law and enforcement of speed limits, use of motorcycle helmets by both

rider and pillion passengers, the use of seat belts by both the driver and passengers, and prohibiting the use of mobile phones while driving. Such actions may need implementation at national, municipal, and local levels.

Research findings from other countries have shown that proper use of a helmet can reduce the risk of a fatal injury by more than 40 percent and the risk of any head injury by approximately 70 percent. Similarly, using a seat belt can decrease the risk of death by 50 percent among drivers and front seat passengers. A driver using a mobile phone while driving is almost four times more likely to be involved in a crash than a driver who is not using a mobile phone.

SAFE SYSTEMS APPROACH

A comprehensive approach to improving road safety in Nepal would be a 'safe systems' approach that is gaining popularity globally. This approach to road safety acknowledges that human beings may make mistakes on the road, but the consequences need not lead to deaths or serious injuries if other actions are in place. It requires shared responsibility for road safety between those who design, build, use and manage roads. That means agencies and the public need to work together.

The safe systems approach includes issues such as driving at speeds appropriate to the conditions, building safe roads (not just greater length of roads) and ensuring that roads are improved and maintained adequately. These actions will reduce the risk of crashes and the severity of impacts when crashes occur. As new roads are being

constructed every year in Nepal, there is an opportunity for us to design the roads that protect all road users so that there are adequate footpaths for pedestrians, cycle lanes for cyclists, and safe crossing points for all road users. Vehicle safety standards are crucial. All vehicles should be checked for their roadworthiness including the availability and functioning of airbags and seat belts, which have been shown to save lives during a crash.

The safe systems approach may initially seem ambitious. However, countries that have implemented it have made the most progress in reducing deaths and injuries over time, including in low- and middle-income countries like Tanzania. Strong leadership along with active involvement of multiple sectors are crucial to executing the safe systems approach.

POST-CRASH CARE

In Nepal, few road traffic crash victims get treatment at the scene of the crash and few are transported promptly by ambulance to a health facility

that is set up to care for them. In this situation, road trauma victims with survivable injuries may die at the scene or on the way to a health facility. Providing appropriate first response to victims at the scene of an injury event followed by quality medical attention has the potential to save lives, reduce injury severity and prevent disability. Therefore, it is essential that enough people are trained to know how to help give first aid to someone who has been in a road traffic crash. First responders could include for example, shopkeepers, other drivers, school children and traffic police officers.

We all need to discontinue the use of word "accident" which is inappropriate for the description of road traffic events and replace by correct terms such as a "crash" or "collision" or "road traffic injury" to develop a culture of prevention. The best way to reduce road traffic deaths and severe injuries in Nepal is through a safe systems approach with good post-crash care. It is now time to get behind a shared vision and to work together to make our roads less hazardous. The decisions we make now will affect future deaths and injuries on our roads. It must be the duty of the Government of Nepal to take strong leadership to address road safety in a safe systems approach involving multiple sectors such as transport, engineers, police, health and education.

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AI for human development

AI can already detect early signs of diabetes from heart rate sensor data, help children with autism manage their emotions, and guide the visually impaired



Michael Chui



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SAN FRANCISCO – The excitement surrounding artificial intelligence (AI) nowadays reflects not only how AI applications could transform businesses and economies, but also the hope that they can address challenges like cancer and climate change. The idea that AI could revolutionize human wellbeing is obviously appealing, but just how realistic is it?

To answer that question, the McKinsey Global Institute has examined more than 150 scenarios in which AI is being applied or could be applied for social good. What we found is that AI could make a powerful contribution to resolving many types of societal challenges, but it is not a silver bullet—at least not yet. While AI's reach is broad, development bottlenecks and application risks must be overcome before the benefits can be realized on a global scale.

To be sure, AI is already changing how we tackle human-development challenges. In 2017, for example, object-detection software and satellite imagery aided rescuers in Houston as they navigated the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. In Africa, algorithms have helped reduce poaching in wildlife parks. In Denmark, voice-recognition programs are used in emergency calls to detect whether callers are experiencing cardiac arrest. And at the MIT Media Lab near Boston, researchers have used "reinforcement learning" in simulated clinical trials involving patients with glioblastoma, the most aggressive form of brain cancer, to reduce chemotherapy doses.

Moreover, this is only a fraction of what is possible. AI can already detect early signs of diabetes from heart rate sensor data, help children with autism manage their emotions, and guide the visually impaired. If these innovations were widely available and used, the health and social benefits would be immense. In fact, our assessment concludes that AI technologies could accelerate progress on each of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

But if any of these AI solutions are to make a difference globally, their use must be scaled up dramatically. To do that, we must first address developmental obstacles and, at the same time, mitigate risks that could render AI technologies more harmful than helpful. On the development side, data accessibility is among the most significant hurdles. In many cases, sensitive or commercially viable data that have societal applications are privately owned and not accessible to nongovernmental organizations. In other cases, bureaucratic inertia keeps otherwise useful data locked up.

So-called last-mile implementation challenges are another common problem. Even in cases where

data are available and the technology is mature, the dearth of data scientists can make it difficult to apply AI solutions locally. One way to address the shortage of workers with the skills needed to strengthen and implement AI capabilities is for companies that employ such workers to devote more time and resources to beneficial causes. They should encourage AI experts to take on *pro bono* projects and reward them for doing so.

There are of course risks. AI's tools and techniques can be misused, intentionally or inadvertently. For example, biases can be embedded in AI algorithms or datasets, and this can amplify existing inequalities when the applications are used. According to one academic study, error rates for facial analysis software are less than one percent



emergencies. Data-dependent partnerships like this one must be expanded and become a feature of firms' operational routines.

AI is fast becoming an invaluable part of the human-development toolkit. But if AI's potential to do good globally is to be fully realized, proponents must focus less on the hype and more on the obstacles that are preventing its uptake.

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Social buzz



Trailokya Raj Aryal @Trailokyaaryal

What ails Nepal? It's not porn, alcohol and drugs. It's politics - responsibility + democracy (?) - rule of law. Is it only me who gets depressed looking at the headlines every morning? We are not peaceful, we are scarily passive and inactive bunch.



Madan Regmi @Madan_Regmi

I am tired of Nepalese politics but not of the country. At times, frustration is galore when the people fail to show their anger and revolutionary zeal even in the time of prime necessity.



@Churokuro

Discussion on Nepalese politics is like playing carom-board with no holes. Your logic and arguments will only bump from one wall to the next, never leading to any outcome and conclusion.



Ujjwal Acharya @UjjwalAcharya

Jail to Parliament - sworn-in as our MP - Parliament to Jail... tell me if this is something else than the mockery of democracy! Justice should never be a matter of political agreement. #Nepal #ReshamFiri



Dixit Ajaya @dixit_ajaya

From Chandragiri: Kathmandu Valley enveloped by layer of dust & tiny pollutants. We are inhaling tiny muck in the air. We should be worried. Our governments & all of us must begin serious work to remove pollutants from the air we breath. Our children deserve much better.



Madhu K. Marasini @madhumarasini

Just the other day I was reading about Deng Xiaoping's Science Technology 'long march' plan! Yesterday news broke about China's Lunar's successful landing on the Moon!



Laurie Garrett @Laurie_Garrett

Delhi #AirPollution topped 500 PM 2.5 - 35 being the allowable limit in the USA. This is like locking yourself in a room & pumping in a mix of 9/11 World Trade Center air + emissions from 10 diesel trucks + air from Calif. brush fires & breathing deeply.

