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Britain–Nepal Academic Council

14/11/2018

Mr Tarik Kafala
Controller of Languages, BBC World Service
Portland Place, London W1A 1AA
Email: tarik.kafala@bbc.co.uk

Re: Position of Reporter/Journalist of the BBC Nepali Service based in the UK

Dear Mr Kafala,

We are the Executive Committee of the Britain-Nepal Academic Council, an Association of UK-based academics, students, and researchers, whose geographical focus is on Nepal and its cultural extensions throughout the world. We are writing to express our concern at the decision of the BBC World Service to close the 50-year-old UK base of the BBC Nepali Service, along with the removal of the position of London-based reporter/journalist (with effect from mid-Dec 2018).

We feel strongly that the BBC Nepali Service should base at least one journalist/reporter in London for the following reasons:

1. Nepalis are one of the fastest-growing ethnic minority communities in the UK, with an estimated population of over 100,000, of whom about two thirds are (retired) British Gurkhas and their families. The Nepali diaspora in the UK are actively engaged in businesses, as well as in social and academic activities. Despite having a very recent history of migration, they have made progress on the political front too, with increasing participation in local and general elections, and have won positions as Councillors, Deputy Mayors, and as Mayor. Thanks to its large population and accessible location, London serves as a regional centre for major Nepal-related activities in the Western world. The influential global network, the 'Non-Resident Nepali Association' (NRNA), was born in London, and a lot of international activities related to Nepal and Nepalis take place here. The BBC Nepali Service is highly respected by members of the Nepali diaspora for its central role in covering their news and events, and for its neutrality and impartiality. As UK taxpayers as well as BBC License fee payers, UK Nepalis (many of whom have taken out UK citizenship) deserve to receive continued services.
2. Britain and Nepal enjoy one of the oldest bilateral diplomatic relations in the world. In 2015 Nepal and the UK observed the completion of the 200 years of the establishment of Gurkha services, and in 2016 the bicentenary of the establishment of diplomatic relations (Nepal is the first country in South Asia to have that milestone). Nepal is one of the priority countries for the FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), receiving a significant quantum of UK aid, business investment and tourism activities taking place in Nepal. The BBC Nepali Service

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has covered all major developments in bilateral relations. The closing of the London position of the BBC Nepali service will be seen as undermining this historic relationship.

For these reasons, we believe that not having a London-based journalist as part of the BBC Nepali Service's team will be a major disadvantage and seriously weaken its reach, coverage, and influence.

As a matter of public interest, therefore, we strongly urge you to reconsider your decision.

Sincerely yours,

Dr [Krishna Adhikari](#)

Chair

(CNSUK/University of Oxford)

And,

Dr [Punam Yadav](#) (University College of London), General Secretary

Dr [Fraser Sugden](#) (University of Birmingham), Treasurer

Professor [David Gellner](#) (University of Oxford).

Professor [Michael Hutt](#) (SOAS, University of London)

Dr [Ben Campbell](#) (Durham University)

Professor [Sondra Hausner](#) (University of Oxford)

Dr [Feyzi Ismail](#) (SOAS, University of London)

Premila van Ommen (University of Arts London)

Dr [Sara Parker](#) (Liverpool John Moores University)

Dr [Stefanie Lotter](#) (SOAS, University of London)

Dr [Kalyan Bhandari](#) (University of the West of Scotland)

Dr [Tejendra Pherali](#) (University College London)

Professor [Edwin van Teijlingen](#) (Bournemouth University)

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