On January 16, 2023, a Yeti Airlines ATR 72 aircraft crashed in Pokhara, resulting in 74 deaths. Unfortunately, this is not the first aviation disaster in Nepal’s history, as it marks the 67th plane crash in the past 60 years, making it one of the worst air safety records in the world. While the cause of the crash is still being investigated, it is highly likely that corruption and mismanagement from the aviation sector played a significant role. The Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) is responsible for regulating the industry in Nepal, but it has been the subject of criticism for prioritizing political and narrow business interests and for protecting airlines that do not adhere to safety and operating standards that will be in line with current aviation norms. In 2014, the European aircraft manufacturer admitted to paying 340,000 euros to secure a contract to provide planes to Nepal Airlines, which further highlighted the prevalence of corruption in the industry.

Questions about accountability in the aviation industry tend to arise only after tragic events like this recent crash. However, despite these incidents, little progress has been made in terms of reform by the government and other responsible entities. While investigation committees are formed after each incident, their reports often lack the level of thoroughness and transparency that is needed. In Nepal, a comprehensive effort is needed to truly reform the aviation sector. This includes providing more robust emergency response teams, investing in better training and operating standards. This has led to the EU banning Nepal Airlines. In 2020, a European investigation was carried out to determine whether the aircraft food service mishap was intentional. The initiative to ban Nepal Airlines was followed by the EU banning a second airline, Buddha Air, which had been involved in a collision with a train.

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