Masculine election

Men and women have fought together to achieve all of Nepal’s recent political developments. But when it comes to reaping the harvest of democracy, men seem to be able to outsmart women.

When Nepal holds its first parliamentary and provincial elections under the new Constitution on 26 November and 7 December, men and women will be participating in the electoral process in almost equal numbers. But their roles will be largely different: while mostly men will be contesting elections, women will mostly be casting votes.

Of the 1,943 candidates who have entered the electoral fray for parliamentary elections, only 146 are women. And only 240 of the 3,339 candidates for provincial elections are women.

“While women have been participating in politics as candidates but the actual decision-making process is dominated by men,” says Mona Thapa of the Child Forum.

Since one-third of the members of Parliament and the provincial assemblies must be women by law, political parties will be obliged to nominate more women under the proportional representation (PR) quotas. Rejina Ghimire, Chairperson of the Nepal Women Association says that ensuring their 33% representation through quotas instead of giving them a chance to contest polls is an insult to women.

“No matter which political party they belong to, all the men always gang up to stop women from coming to the frontlines,” says Bhumika Khatiwada, Chairperson of the Nepal National Women League.

In the past, the number of women candidates was as low as 24, which has led to their exclusion from policy-making and representation.

This is because a significant number of women voters opt for candidates chosen by their husbands, fathers, uncles or even brothers.

Sociologist Chalina Mishra says, “Men, especially in villages, engage more in social interactions, so they end up influencing how their wives vote.”

“Women need to be more educated about politics and their role as a voter,” says Dharma Raya, a political scientist.

Women are less aware of political issues and less willing to participate in elections, which is why they are less likely to vote.

The gender breakdown of voter turnout shows that women cast their votes more than men. This is mainly because more men migrate for work than women. But their greater turnout doesn’t really mean that women have more influence than men over electoral outcomes.

“Women have to learn how to be assertive and get involved in political processes,” says Dharma Raya.

As women gain more knowledge about politics and their role as voters, their influence in political decision-making will increase.

“Women have the power to change the future of Nepal by using their votes wisely,” says Dharma Raya.

Women are the future of Nepal. Let’s give them the power to shape it.”

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This is an article from the Nepali Times newspaper, published on page 5 of the 17-23 November 2017 issue. The article discusses the role of women in the upcoming elections and highlights the challenges they face in participating equally in political processes.

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Source: Nepali Times, 17-23 November 2017
A national health insurance scheme isn’t as easy as it looks

Kundra Dolla

New national health insurance plan will not make medical care in Nepal more affordable and accessible. Our report is based on interviews with experts involved in the design and implementation of the scheme.

Healthcare in Nepal

The government’s efforts to provide better and affordable health services to all citizens will have to continue. However, the facilities, safety, and other aspects should be seriously considered to make sure the policy is workable. The new policy would be the best for a national NHS system.

Nepal Times

Elections are a political process. Understanding and learning about politics are important for a democratic society.

Karma Tensing

The results are expected to affect the government’s future policies and decisions. The elections are a step towards a democratic society.

Times

In perfect harmony

Kamal Kafale

The government has implemented several measures to improve healthcare in Nepal. The rural health care system in Nepal is evolving, and the country is moving towards a universal healthcare system.

Korea Kafale

The government has been working on several policies to improve healthcare in the country. The rural health care system in Nepal is evolving, and the country is moving towards a universal healthcare system.

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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER
A carbon neutral Nepal is possible
We just need the right policies to switch to water and sunlight

Imagines all our young men and women working all over the world, saving money so that we can burn oil imported from the same countries they tail in. What a sad state of affairs.

In the meantime, many cities and countries have announced ambitious and time-bound goals to phase out fossil fuel powered vehicles. Nepal has no petroleum, and it is time we recognize this and move ahead to wear ourselves from a fossil fuel economy.

How clever are we? We send our young to oil-rich countries, they send money home and we import and burn fossil fuel, pollute the air we breathe and send the money right back… really clever.

We recently celebrated the Chaut festival by worshipping the sun and water – the sources of all life on Earth! That are at the centre of our faith. Given the dangerous state of Nepal’s future balance of payments, it may be good to make the sun and water the centre piece of Nepal’s economy as well as our development and energy policy.

The idea is to use the heat and light from the sun to the maximum, to conserve and wisely use every drop of water that falls on Nepal. Showers down the Irrigation fields, is stored in our water tanks and snow-capped mountains, lakes, wetlands and historical ponds.

Our foresight understands the importance of solar and hydropower, which is why they accorded religious significances to them at Chaut. Which is why Nepal needs a Chaut energy policy, to save the country from bankruptcy. With the bumper rice harvest this year, again a gift from the sun and water, imagine how much hark and straw we have for fodder and fuel.

The last Power Summit organized by Independent Power Producers Association of Nepal (IPPA) declared that Nepal could and would generate 10,000 MW of hydropower in the next 10 years. The power producers who were in attendance said 10,000 was not ambitious enough they doubled the number and also reduced the number of years to achieve the goal.

The core issue is not how many thousand megawatts we can generate but whether we have an economy that can consume that power. Rice cookers are a good start. An average Nepali eats 100 kg of rice a year, which translates into a list of LPG import we could reduce. Electrical appliances, vehicles, transport and even storage batteries could reduce our dependence on imported gas, petrol and diesel.

All of us pulled out our rice cookers to substitute for LPG during the Indian blockades. If the NDA set a differential price for sum peak time use of electricity, many would start using these efficiencies now. We have to become more creative in how we utilize our plentiful natural resources biomass, agricultural waste and waste in general as energy.

If Bih Hospital can convert its waste into fuel, everyone else can. Poultry and dairy farms are already taking the lead, creating mini grids, and there is a policy in place for net-metering and selling the excess back to the grid. The payback rate for rooftop solar is very attractive. We only need to upgrade our meters. Hopefully, every Nepali will be eligible to be members of IPPAN. All citizens can be independent power producers.

The first day end use of any local hydro plant must be cable bridges and cable cars for the transport of goods. See Bhaucher Ghale trees Nepal Times, 4780. The lead factor ensures profitability of these local power plants. A good hybrid energy project would be where we supplement all run of the river power plants with 3-6 hours of storage power to help us generate power during the day and having a small storage capacity to enable us to generate power during times of peak demand.

Should we do it now, or wait till fossil fuel import keeps rising and remittances keep falling to the point the country will not be able to pay? History provides us with the courage to look on the path of a clean and carbon neutral Nepal. Let us grab it.

Anil Chitrakar

GUEST COLUMN

Burma’s final solution

The Rohingya have been fleeing persecution in Burma for decades

S

ince 25 August, more than half a million Rohingya Muslims and Hindus, women, children and men have fled their homes into the Rakhine state, as the army and Buddhist vigilantes systematically burned down their homes and unleashed mass murder, rape and torture.

Rangoon calls the Rohingya (illegal) immigrants, despite evidence that they inhabited the Asian territory for hundreds of years prior to colonial rule. Persecution of the Rohingyas has worsened since the democratic forces have been sharing power with the military in Burma. It seems to be Burma’s ‘final solution’ to expunge from its territory, and its 200-year history of migration, the minority it persists on labeling ‘Bangali’. If this massacross continues, the entire remaining Muslim population of Rakhine state could flee to neighbouring countries by the end of the year.

Rohingyas elsewhere since the 1970s, Rohingyas have been fleeing persecution into largely Bangladesh but also India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and in recent boat accidents to Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia. After the recent cycle of violence and flight in the last three months, the Rakhine state as a whole, for Migration (IOM) has registered 557,000 new arrivals in Bangladesh alone.

The International Persecution by the Rohingya has been effectively downgrading the United Nation’s use of the term ‘ethnic cleansing’ to a complicity “with no international law.” After a week long hearing at the tribunal, held at the University of Malaya, Judge Daniel Feinstein stated that the Burmese government was guilty of “war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.”

The international community’s low-level response to the scale of the human rights and human rights and humanitarian emergency. And its lack of will to force Burma to respect the vulnerability of an oppressed and abandoned peoples to external influences in a volatile region. International aid agencies estimate that barely 25% of urgently needed help is available.

India and China have deep economic, military and diplomatic ties with Burma, and have voiced support for the government’s military action against an alleged Rohingya terrorist threat. In the United Nations Security Council, China used its veto to block attempts to address reports of the army’s abuse of the Rohingyas.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that China supports efforts by Burma to protect its national security. Indian Prime Minister Modi, on a visit to Burma in the midst of the violation in August, echoed, without reservation, the Burmese government’s rhetoric branding the Rohingyas as ‘terrorists’ and justifying the military action. (Subsequently, India has extended generous humanitarian assistance to Bangladesh.)

India is expanding its military engagement with Burma and has announced support for the government’s military action against an alleged Rohingya terrorist threat. In the United Nations Security Council, China used its veto to block attempts to address reports of the army’s abuse of the Rohingyas.

The present immigration laws, policies and practices of most states do not make a distinction between stateless people and other migrants. Stateless persons cannot return to the country that has taken away their citizenship. The massive violation of human rights of the Supplement to the Convention and the urgent Humanitarian crisis calls for urgent action by the state and reduction in the actual and perceived dangers faced by the state and the context of the creation of statelessness urgently in the interest of the peace, prosperity and political stability of the state.

Tapan Bose is Secretary General of the South Asia Forum for Human Rights.
Of men, by men, for men

is in Nepal,” says sociologist Bishwa Kalayan Parajuli. “Men can easily manipulate constitutional provisions to suppress women.”

Electoral Commissioner Ila Sharma says: “We need to discourage political parties from manipulating constitutional provisions on women’s inclusion, and we probably need a stricter law for that.”

“The elections have shown how deeply entrenched patriarchy constitutes of Jhapa are women. Most of these female candidates have been fielded by fringe parties, and they are unlikely to win a seat.”

Young Sherstha in Pabitra and Nepal Gardanva in Jhapa

Women’s business

The Nepal chapter of Business and Professional Women (BPW) scored a first at the recent 25th BPW International Congress held in Cairo, BPW Nepal and its president Ambiga Sherstha both received a special

Gertude Mangelia Award. The Nepal team also won the Power to Make Difference through Action project competition for its work on post-earthquake reconstruction.

Young BPW Nepal President, Narsingh Bhattarai, was elected as an international representative.

Qatar loves pets

Passengers of Qatar Airways can now travel with their pets more easily across the globe. The airline has reduced the cost of transporting large pets to $600 and doubled the weight allowance to 15kg.

Turkish profits

Turkish Airlines marked a record 4% increase in net profit in the 3rd quarter of 2017 compared to the same period in 2016, which records a loss of $393 million.

VERNA arrives

Myanmar’s Adani Group has launched The Next Gen Verna through its authorised distributor, Lumi Intercontinental. The sedan’s key features include a shark fin antenna, 7” touchscreen audio and video navigation, seat height adjuster and centre console storage.

Foodmandu: 7 years

In commemoration of its 7th anniversary, on 11 November Foodmandu launched its revamped website and announced on its Facebook page: “7 which will take place from 15 December 2017.”

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The views parfait, the light magnifique

Filming luxury fashion brand suitcases at dawn on Lake Taupo

In the countryside: "New Zealand is so beautiful, the views parfait, the light magnifique." Superstar photographer Eric Valli — tall, ramplified and irresistible — begoggled by the team with adrenaline-fueled tales of honey hunters and birds’ nest collectors, and adventures filming Himalayas in Dolpo and The Trail in the Himal desert. I enjoyed working with Eric in New Zealand — his extravagant energy and positive spirit were contagious. He has long shared a special bond with the Himalayas, and my house is decorated with his gifts of Tibetan and Bhutanese textiles from way back. Eric’s two daughters were brought up with my sons, schooling together in Kathmandu and Melbourne. But we had never met before. He did not want to keep his projects mysterious and under the radar. With fame came a self-obession that all of us found trying, including possibly him himself. It was a family game of drinks to drink to keep track of the number of ‘vs’ and ‘ms’ that he used in every sentence.

The New Zealand photo set-ups were creative and complicated: a 1990s motorbike with echoes on a grassy high step, a high snow Called and a load of sleds, a string of packhorses on a mountain top overlooking the lake, a rustic raft complete with sail and steaming stove, a safari tent beneath fern trees, and an elaborate treehouse deep within a beach forest.

The precious historic luggages traveled in a secure truck with burly uniformed guards keeping a nervous eye out for rain. Eric Valli worked his magic, Christian continued his euphoric praise of New Zealand’s landscape and Caroline’s team, despite vacations, variations and against all odds, somehow made it all come together.

I was tasked with finding a location for one last shot — a lake jetty at dawn with distant mists and a full moon, with an antique frame that had once frame a boat on New Zealand’s North island. Permission was sought from the Mori resident. Eric flew to Lake Taupo, Fred flew his floatplane down the valley and across the lake to Omahau, and the Fred and New Zealand support team decamped to a rustic trout fishing lodge on the Tongariro River (Eric on paddle, Iffy).

Next morning at a chilly 4am I was driving too fast with Caroline through the sleeping village to the landing stage. When a grey cat ran out directly under my wheel, killed instantly, its pale blue collar had a disk with a telephone number that I noted. The last morning, I was distracted, suddenly by the deed and waiting to call its owner at a civilised hour. After a quick rightseeing spin with Fred above the morning lake and food farewell hugs, the jubilant French piled into large cars heading to the airport and Paris. The Kiwi team packed up and left exhausted and relieved. Caroline and I drove slowly, dismayed to see that a large green council truck with a furious rotor blades was chasing cropping the grass verge in the village.

SO FAR SO GOOD Lisa Choegyal

There are too many monasteries, prayer flags, temples, pake and people in Nepal.” The querulous voice on the phone from France sounded personally affronted. “Can’t you find us somewhere that is more just

outrageous demands, but never had the Himalayas been so summarily dismissed. The French production manager needed locations for luxury fashion brand luggage – not living models, but suitcases out of a Paris museum, so precious that they would need their own security guards.

“Of course,” I sighed, making my decision. “Let me get back to you.”

Thus it was that a few months later I stood beneath lush green foliage on the northern edge of Lake Waiouru in New Zealand’s South island. Its pasty, luminous surface reflected rocky peaks, spiky cabbage trees and a clear blue antipodes sky. Adventure Consultants had agreed to handle the arrangements, and were already regretting it. Caroline, who is more used to managing Everest climbing expeditions, ran her fingers through her long dark hair in frustration.

“Why do they keep changing their minds? Why don’t they decide what they need and then stick to it?”

Based in nearby Queenstown, the French crew helicoptered to sit on remote rivers, lakes and mountainsides — blissfully free of temples and monasteries — supported by movie Kiwi fresh from the set of Lord of the Rings. Whilst my production team struggled with plans and decisions, Christian the chic Parisian design director delighted

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in the countryside: "New Zealand is so beautiful, the views parfait, the light magnifique." Superstar photographer Eric Valli — tall, ramplified and irresistible — begoggled by the team with adrenaline-fueled tales of honey hunters and birds’ nest collectors, and adventures filming Himalayas in Dolpo and The Trail in the Himal desert. I enjoyed working with Eric in New Zealand — his extravagant energy and positive spirit were contagious. He has long shared a special bond with the Himalayas, and my house is decorated with his gifts of Tibetan and Bhutanese textiles from way back. Eric’s two daughters were brought up with my sons, schooling together in
Kathmandu’s sole

Three generations of a Chinese family have run a shoe shop for 45 years

SHREEJANA SHRESTHA

Wong Shiao Leung was holding up a pair of bрогги, describing them for a customer at his shop in Bag Bazaar, when he was interrupted by his youngest daughter. They had a brief conversation in Hakka, a language spoken mainly in southern China, then he returned to the customer.

Wong’s ancestors migrated to India from China more than 150 years ago, and his father moved from Kolkata to Kathmandu during the 1962 Sino-Indian war, during which many Chinese in India were taken to internment camps in the Rajasthan desert. The Chinese family has been preserving its roots by continuing to make leather shoes and speaking Hakka, in Nepal.

"Nationality is without borders, whereas language is one’s identity," says Wong, 41, who was born in Kathmandu. "We feel lucky that we weren’t forced to uproot ourselves from our culture like many in Assam and Calcutta after the war."

After arriving in Nepal, the Wong family resorted to shoe-making, opening a retail shop in Bag Bazaar. Wong & Co Chinese Shoes, which sells men’s dingo boots, bрогги, chain boots, uniform boots and Chelsea boots. Several other handmade designs are available for men but female leather shoes are by custom order only. To cater to other customers, Wong now also imports 20% of his wares from China.

He says people in Kathmandu still have little knowledge about handmade leather shoes and don’t trust local products. Wong has also noticed the younger generation prefers style over durability, which makes his business more challenging. "Handmade leather shoes are slightly more expensive than ready-made ones because of their quality and durability. Even the sole has to be handmade," he explains.

If imported, a pair of genuine leather bрогги costs at least US$100. At Wong’s the same quality shoes are available for less than US$60, including a one-year warranty.

The shoemaker says he isn’t ready to compromise on quality. Although his sales have gone down over the last decade, he is committed to continuing making quality products, and is optimistic. "People don’t trust the local products now, but they will eventually," he says.

Wong is prepared to expand his business, but his status in Nepal won’t permit it. Although he was born here, he is unable to get Nepali citizenship because his father was born in India. “I have plans to expand the business by buying a piece of land and exporting shoes, but I can’t because I don’t have Nepali citizenship,” he says.

Wong pays monthly taxes to the government and has employed more than 20 people in his factory in Balkot. He says he can easily get Indian citizenship if he returns to India, but he wants to stay in Nepal. “I have called Kathmandu my home my whole life and I want to live the rest of my years here.”

THREE GENERATIONS: Wong Shiao Leung (second from right) with his wife Wong Supyeh (right), father Wong Hau Sen and daughter Wong Chai Fung.

Commitment to the craft

Came with Nepali Times feature on Wong & Co/Bag Bazaar in 2017. Chinese shoemaker Wong Hau Tet has lived in Nepal for 65 years.
Mt Kangchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world, is not really a peak, but it is a mountain range. The outstanding Kang is that most of its 25-km-long ridgeline is above 8,000m, spanning the Nepal-Bhutan border. The traverse of this great knifedge is regarded as the most challenging unclimbed mountain route left. The northern approach is wholly within Nepal, and accessible from Tipling in a week’s trek. Since it is situated in eastern Nepal, where the annual rainfall is three times that in Kathmandu Valley, the biodiversity here is unparalleled in the Himalaya. Many of the species of orchids, flowering plants, amphibians, reptiles, insects and mammals found in this area occur nowhere else in the world.

The Kangchenjunga Conservation Area has at least 60 varieties of orchids, 30 types of rhododendrons and 16 out of 24 endemic plants.
of Nepal. Due to its remoteness, only 300 trekkers visited the region last year. The newly black-topped airstrip in Tappeung is still not operational, and the ride from Bhadrapur takes 12 hours, with a night stop in Ilam. The Great Himalayan Trail starts at Kangchenjunga Base Camp (KBC), and has brought more tourists. On a recent trip, we were among many Nepali trekkers doing the standard route from Tappeung to KBC. On this page you will find the itinerary and pictures from the trek.
GETAWAY

Temple Tree Resort and Spa, for a majestic view of the Annapurna Mountain Range and Fewa Lake, Ghandruk, Lakeside, Pokhara, (069) 4851891, @templetreeresort

Chhaime Raul, Enjoy the beauty of nature and a peaceful weekend. Perfect for hikers, painters and family holidays. Bahundanda, P.O.B.O. 487571072, 9861981049

Thamel Eco Resort, For a relaxed weekend, bask in yoga, meditation and spa at this eco-friendly resort. Thamel, Bhadagni, Nepal, (01) 4957905

Mango Tree Lodge, Cattle-raising, fishing at Marsyangdi and Jeep safari at Bardia National Park. info@ mangoletreeodge

La Bella Cafe, Let Italian cuisine have your palette this weekend. Place to go for good portions of food. Chisapani, Thamel, (01) 4700078

The Last Resort, Test your limits with kayaking, hiking, rock climbing, rafting, mountain biking, bungee jumping, Rishikesh, Sindhupuchchhe, (069) 4851722, info@thelastresort.com

Patalebhan Vineyard Resort, just 3 km away of Kathmandu city, the resort is a perfect place to spend your weekends with food and wine. Offering astounding views and suites of Langtang, Chame, Mardi and Annapurna Himalaya. Dhapatar, Kathmandu, 9861756894, patalalbhan@gmail.com

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 10 - 16 November

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>AQI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 - 15 November</td>
<td>95 - 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 24 November</td>
<td>95 - 150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In winter, as in Kathmandu Valley, the city is finding the effects of the austere inversions that keep snow at ground level underneath blue skies and colder air. This traps the particulate and gaseous emissions from vehicles, as well as brick kilns and necropolis fires, the worst kind. Particles should be at least 3.5 times, which don’t just stay above the tips of trees, affecting the leaf and other organs. This week’s summary graph at the top of this page is a collaboration between the US embassy in Kathmandu and Nepal Times. The Air Quality Index is the monitor of very unhealthy air as Wednesday.

https://us-neembassy.buzz.aqi-quality-monitoring

La Bella Cafe, Leave Italian cuisine have your palate this weekend. Place to go for good portions of food. Chisapani, Thamel, (01) 4700078

Just a walk or, Kathmandu city, the resort is a perfect place to spend your weekends with food and wine. Offering astounding views and suites of Langtang, Chame, Mardi and Annapurna Himalaya. Dhapatar, Kathmandu, 9861756894, patalalbhan@gmail.com

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Mango Tree Lodge, Cattle-raising, fishing at Marsyangdi and Jeep safari at Bardia National Park. info@ mangoletreeodge
Get off the beaten trek

New trekking guidebook shows us how to get away from the crowds on Nepal’s mountains

SIÂN PRITCHARD-JONES
and BOB GIBBONS

Witten by avid Nepal trekkers, Martin Bate and Olav Myholt, Adventures in Nepal is one of the most adventurous books ever compiled about trekking in the Nepalese Himalayas. Beautifully illustrated with exquisite photographs, clear maps, an informative style and stylistic design, it serves as the best introduction to over 120 treks in the country. The guidebook is a joint effort by the dynamic and well-known Nepalese publishers, Himalayan Map House, and the Norway-Nepal Association. Its aims are simple, explained in the first paragraph of the preface:

There are thousands of tour operators in Nepal and around the world keen on sending trekkers to Nepal, and trying to tell you what is best for you. It will help both your peace of mind and the health of tourism in Nepal if you are equipped with knowledge, critical awareness and sound expectations. This book has been written with the aim of assisting your planning and offering realistic perspectives on what you can achieve within the time available, depending on your interests and level of fitness.

As anyone who has been to Nepal will know, the two most popular regions of the country for trekkers are the Everest and Manaslu ranges. However, there are many other equally stunning areas of the country, sometimes quiet and remote, always alluring and charming, towered over by yet more dazzling mountains. These long-overlooked regions deserve the attention of a greater audience.

Areas such as Manaslu and Mustang are rapidly becoming the talk of Kathmandu and of discombobulating trekkers looking for a new adventure. Easily accessible areas like Ganesh Himal, Langtang and Rolwaling do not rely on flights and hold enchanting secrets that few are aware of — pristine forests, superb wildlife, quaint villages and evocative monasteries.

Known as Makalu, one of the three Moster’s favourite trekking the high and wild paradise. The final frontier of Nepal is the Far West, where life continues almost unchanged over centuries. The remote peaks of Api, Sagal, Nampa, holy Om Puurbah and Kanjiroba are the equal of any of the more well-known peaks.

The cultural attractions of Nepal are varied and intriguing. In the first few pages, this book introduces facets of geography, environment, climate, culture, people, religion and of course some enlightening political background. It also includes useful hints about the conduct that visitors should adopt and notes how their presence can be a benefit to a society that is very different, yet in many ways an inspiration.

No one can visit Nepal and not be changed forever. Tourism is a two-way process, where both sides can learn from each other: it should be an engine for greater awareness and tolerance in the world.

Perhaps uniquely, Adventures in Nepal is set out with simplicity of use in mind. Treks are arranged not by regions, but by the number of days that each trekking route requires. Itineraries vary from one to two days up to several months for the Tiny Himalaya Trail route.

This is really useful for all when planning, because most trekkers are sadly limited by holiday time. Visitors will soon realize that the concept of time in Nepal is far more relaxed and it stick contrast to that familiar to most of the bust, go-getting, materialistic world. The mesmerizing trails and panoramic views soon wash away those fixed habits of slavishly keeping track of time becomes something almost alien for a few brief days or weeks.

Life is reduced to walking, eating and sleeping, the sense heightened and focused only on nature and its grandest designs.

After you have finally decided which area of the country to explore, why not seek out a guidebook specific to your chosen destination? Also produced by Himalayan Map House, Himalayan Travel Guides are specific guidebooks to most of the areas presented in this book, the unique guide to the Annapurna Circuit written by André de Rudder and Prem Rai, as well as guidebooks written by us.

Adventures in Nepal is your introduction to the little known parts of Nepal and its fabulous Himalayan peaks.

Siân Pritchard-Jones and Bob Gibbons met on a trek from Kanchenjunga to Ladakh in 1983 and have been writing Himalayan guidebooks ever since.
‘Taandro’

There is one good thing that came out of the 10-year insurgency in Nepal: it is the movie that it spawned. Teetor Ritika Shrestha’s Uma, Nischal Basnet’s ‘Talakung’ or Thika, Min Bahadur Rai’s ‘Kalo Puthi’ and Deepak Rauniyar’s ‘White Sun’ are all examples.

What sets ‘Taandro’ apart is that, unlike the other movies listed above, it is based on a true story.

Directed by Sambit Bhatia, ‘Taandro’ is based on the book ‘Smti Ka Dibhara’ by Ganga Bahadur Lama, a former Maoist cadre. Lama, also known by his nom de guerre Komli, is the leader of a cultural wing of the Maoists. In 2003, while performing in a village in Lomiju, he was shot in the left leg during an army attack. Lama spends 96 hours bleeding alone in a field on the edge of the village after getting separated from his comrades. None of the villagers are willing to help him; instead blaming the cultural team for the death of a woman killed by the army the previous night.

The film successfully portrays the views of Nepal living in western Nepal regarding the Maoists and the insurgency. They are uncomplaining of the rebels, providing food and shelter only out of compulsions. The highlight of the film is when a young girl rises to the villagers and gives food and water to the injured guerrilla soldier.

The cast, most of whom have theatre backgrounds, do a wonderful job, but cinematographer Prunuma Pradhan fails to deliver, apart from the time-lapse, and the music doesn’t do justice to the movie.

Despite a good story, the director of ‘Taandro’ fails in his visual treatment of the subject and in generating any sympathy from the audience for the lead character, who is shown as weak and often questioning the significance of the ‘people’s war’.

Despite these criticisms, ‘Taandro’ will also be good resource for those looking to learn more about the war. £

Rahim Gi

CHEAPER DRUGS: Brosok KC of the committee formed for subsidised pharmaceuticals submits a report to Prime Minister Deuba at Singha Durbar on Monday. Former Health Minister Gagan Thapa is also pictured.

HEALTHY PROGRESS: The Ministry of Health, with support from JSIDE, releases the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2016 in Kathmandu on Monday. The report highlights progress in maternal and child health over the last 20 years.

GEARING UP: Participants at an interaction on China’s Belt and Road Initiative for South Asia, organised by the Nepal-China Friendship Society in Kathmandu on Monday.

ECO-FRIENDLY SALE: Models showcasing hand woven, eco-friendly saris at a Khadi Nepali Fashion event supported by the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu on Saturday.
Election epicentres

Santa Galza Magar in Himl Khadgastrha, 15-18 May

The first parliamentary and provincial elections under the new Constitution, on 26 November and 7 December, could produce upset victors that could possibly reshape national politics. Almost all top leaders of major parties have entered the electoral fray, but their wins are not guaranteed, and their shock defeats could make or break new alliances. Prime Minister and Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba has won all five parliamentary elections since 1991, but his victory is not certain this time. If the results of the last local elections are any indication, the NC is behind the UML-Maoist coalition by at least 8,000 votes in Deuba’s Duddhikhel constituency.

To make matters worse for Deuba, there is a feud between NC Duddhikhel committee President Karna Malla and ex-President Prakash Singh Bhatta. The Malla group even organised a rally against Deuba ahead of local polls. Observers say the rift and the left alliance could be bad news for Deuba. And if he bites the dust, his allies (even within the NC, Ram Chandra Poudel, could consolidate his grip over the party. But even Poudel’s fate in his native Tanahun is far from certain because of the mutiny of his party colleague Gaurav Rana Joshi. Although, the Election Commission nullified Joshi’s candidacy because of his involvement in a corruption case, he is spearheading a campaign to defeat Poudel.

CPN (Maoist-Centre) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal is much stronger than his rival Bidhan Pandey of the RPP in Chitwan 8, especially after forging an alliance with the UML. But the animosity between the local cadres of the UML and the Maoist, caused by the Bhantang concerns during local elections, has not yet healed. Thousands of UML supporters are unlikely to vote for Dahal. If Dahal suffers a shock defeat in Chitwan, he might reconsider his party’s alliance with the UML. With the NC still trying to claim him out of the UML’s embrace, the possibility of a renewed partnership between Deuba and Dahal cannot be ruled out just yet.

Unlike Deuba, Poudel and Dahal, UML Chair KP Oli’s win is certain. The UML has a strong organisational base in Oli’s Jhapa 5 constituency, which has been further consolidated by Maoist support. And Oli’s opponent, the NC’s Khagendra Adhikari, is not a well-known face. Top Maoist leaders like Upeni Yadav, Mahant Thakur and Rajendra Mahato are also facing tough tests. Yadav is pitted against former irrigation minister Umesh Yadav of the Maoist-UML alliance in Saptari 2. But the Federal Socialist Forum Nepal (USF-N) boss is more worried about a swirl from his own alliance than the left block’s candidate. Thakur is challenged by a rebel candidate of his own RPP in Mahottari 3. Mahato faces a mammoth opponent in NC General Secretary Binendra Nirli.

The upcoming elections could also produce symbolic results. If Rajendra Lingam of the RPP defeats the NC’s Krishna Sitoula in Jhapa 3, Hindu royalties will feel encouraged to push even more strongly for a rollback of secularism. And if the Saathi Rakesh Thapa party fails to win a single seat, it will send a message that Nepalis are yet not ready for an alternative force. Some prominent leaders are likely to be left out of the new Parliament as they cancel each other out. For example, ex-Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai is challenged by the Left Alliance’s Navajyoti Kaji Shrestha in Khotka 2. Only one of the two will make it to the new Parliament.

Analyst Parajit Acharya says: “The defeat of any top leader will change political equations not just in their own party, but across the national political spectrum.”
A load of rubbish

The capital’s residents are used to garbage piling up on the streets, but nothing will prepare them for the crisis that is soon to come.

SAHINA SHRESTHA

For as long as anyone can remember, Kathmandu has had a garbage problem. The Valley’s rapid and unplanned growth, poor municipal management and the absence of elected mayors for 20 years made it a chronic crisis. But nothing can prepare us for what is coming. The Valley’s only landfill site at Sisdole is in total capacity with six months, and there are no alternatives planned.

What has made matters worse is the increase in plastic waste, and the failure to recycle the biodegradable rubbish that makes up more than half of the Valley’s current garbage. Kathmandu Valley’s main towns have also never developed a comprehensive waste management system that looks beyond just collecting and dumping waste. Sisdole was meant to be a stop-gap landfill for two years, but has been receiving the capital’s trash for more than a decade. Preparation of a long-term facility in Bhumjhansara has been slow.

“We have been expanding the capacity of the current landfill site, but now that we don’t find an alternative in the next six months there will be a crisis situation,” warns the person whose job it is to solve the problem, Ruben Man Shrestha, chief of the environmental division at Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC).

As usual, Nepal, the core problem is lack of coordination, in this case between the municipality, the national government and trans-sectorial jurisdictions. The issue has been compromised by conflict over which of the three tiers of government (municipal, provincial and federal) is responsible for garbage.

The proposed Bhumjhansara site is located on the border of Nawalparasi and Chitwan districts and will have the capacity to handle Kathmandu’s waste for 30 years after completion. The government has acquired 90 hectares for the project, which is estimated to cost nearly Rs 7 billion.

Although construction of a landfill is underway and diversion of a river at the landfill site has been completed, the new landfill structure has caused confusion over who is responsible for completing the project.

Biplav Poudel, CEO of the Solid Waste Management Technical Support Centre, which was previously tasked with managing the waste, says, “We sent in a proposal to the ministry but with the new political structure, the budget hasn’t been earmarked for the construction of the landfill itself. But if I were, it will still take at least three years for it to be completed.”

Kathmandu Valley generates 800 tons of solid waste every day out of which more than 60% is still organic, which could technically be composted. But since garbage is not segregated, it adds to the weight and bulk of the trash.

Now commercial entities are using the Organic 6% and Uniform 1% Paper: 1% Glass: 3% Meat: 2% Others: 2% Institutional Garbage (hospitals, nurseries) Organic: 22% Paper: 26% Glass: 2% Metal: 1% Others: 10%

As the national government has been unable to decide on the landfill site, commercial starts are finding a loophole in the law and are taking advantage of the situation. New commercial startups are filling the gap left by government neglect of managing and recycling the capital’s waste. Watch video online. 

NOT LETTING IT GO TO WASTE

Kathmandu Valley, a major garbage dumping site, is trying to come up with an approach that looks at all aspects of waste management: waste collection, waste recycling, landfill, hazardous waste management and community engagement.

Investment so it is obvious that it will take time. But, the government, keep changing, so we have to explain and negotiate with new people every time,” says Nabin Singh Maharjan of the Clean Valley Company.
Cash from trash

In 2013, the group Blue Bitte to Value partnered with Society for Environmental Conservation (SEC), a local initiative in Panga, Kirtipur, on a community-based waste management project. The idea was simple: segregate waste at source, recycle whatever possible and send only the residue to the landfill.

The project included a machine that converted organic waste to compost, and covered 100 households and the community. In 2015, the initiative took off.

Not wanting to let garbage go to waste, Nabin Bikas Maharjan decided to make a business out of Blue Bitte. Kirtipur Waste Management Services (OWIS) was born, with Blue Bitte providing human, technical and managerial support and SEC taking care of the collection, segregation and processing. The group now expanded to 19 wards in Panga.

The segregated garbage is sorted into wet (organic), recyclable dry waste and non-recyclable dry waste. The organic waste is converted into compost and the recyclable dry waste, like plastic bottles, is sold to trusted vendors. Only the non-recyclable waste is then sent to the landfill.

“Most households now convert unmanageable waste to compost on their own, we mainly get organic trash,” says Maharjan. Each household pays Rs 75 to 150 a month for the service, depending on the amount of waste they generate. Households that cannot afford the service get it for free. Since the project started, the volume of waste going to landfills has been reduced by 86%.

Blue Bitte is now partnering with Yak & Yeti and Hyatt Regency to manage the hotel’s waste in an environmentally friendly manner. Of the 1.5 tons of waste collected there, some of the wet organic waste is converted into animal feed. The rest is sorted at source, re-engaged, reused and recycled.

Other garbage startups, like Deba and Thulisla — started by young Nepali social entrepreneurs — see to the gap in waste management left by government and municipal bodies.

Says Maharjan: “If you can involve up to 1,500 households, you can make a profit but if you are looking to do it at a smaller level, it’s better not to get involved. Most of this is informal and there are no government framework.”

PLASTIC SOCIETY

It is estimated that more than 10% of Kathmandu’s waste is made up of plastic and other disposable wrappers like foil. This proportion is growing as Nepalis consume a consumption, throwaway society with no regulations to force manufacturers to labor in collection and recycling of plastic bags and wrappers.

The government has banned the use of plastic bags multiple times, but the law was never properly implemented because strict enforcement was done to give consumers alternatives. Plastic industries, which benefit from political patronage, say they were never consulted.

Political parties get donations from plastic manufacturers for election campaigns, so the law is never seriously enforced,” explains Dipendra Chhetri of the Solid Waste Management Technical Support Centre. “Why do you think they will listen to environmentalists like us or the manufacturers?”

It is the small details that give you the big picture.

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Space cadets

According to a recent news report, 2,636 Nepalis have registered with the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for a flight to Mars under its InSight mission that will blast off in May next year on a 728-day trip. Based on proportion of a country’s population, Nepal comes out right at the top in terms of our enthusiasm for interplanetary travel. We understand from NASA sources that some of the lucky ones already have boarding passes. If everything up to here is the truth, the whole tooth and nothing but the tooth, and if you don’t believe me I have scanned the said news item, believe.

Nepal has been migrating to neighbouring countries for centuries, and there isn’t a place in the world today where there aren’t people from Nepal. Now that there isn’t anywhere else to go on Earth, Nepal seems keen to travel to the far reaches of the solar system. Not surprisingly, more women are interested in Mars because they read somewhere that men are from there. Already, some of them are practicing walking around in an alien environment and have chosen the cement factory quarry in Chhobar. With its rocky landscape and toxic air quality, it most accurately resembles the terrain, as well as the atmosphere, on the Martian surface.

Since they are in the habit of grabbing every Janet that comes their way, some politicians and civil servants have also signed up for Mars, and the space cadets from Singh Darbar have been enquiring about their TADAC. Which is all well and good because as a country that has never been under any foreign yolk in recent human history, we can’t afford to be left behind in the space race to colonise the Near Planets.

Being a very adaptable people, Nepalis will feel perfectly at home on the surface of Mars since the texture and thickness of the dust will be similar to the dust at the Sandakphu intersection. Although there are signs that Mars once had water, there isn’t any left—in just like Kathmandu Valley. The Martian atmosphere is made up of 96% carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide, with very little oxygen, and most residents of Kathmandu are already breathing that.

The second order of business as Nepalis land on the Red Planet is to set up a local chapter of the Nepal Communist Party (Revolution) which can immediately explore astronomical kickbacks on lucrative construction contracts under BOOT schemes. The possibilities are endless: shopping malls with multiplexes, medical colleges and fully-licensed Mars Bars.

In our immediate vicinity, China has launched Great Leap Forward rockets into orbit, putting the first ever card-carrying member of the Communist Party into orbit, completely bypassing the aerospace industry tradition of sending a hamster up first. The next step will be to launch an even Greater Leap Forward rocket, so that Discarded Gentiles can attain escape velocity. Not to be outdone, India has announced its own manned moon probe, which is facing delays because its first batch of fanatical trances are stuck in Delhi due to smog. Ancient astrological formulae may have to be recalculated since the Indian moon landing may ever so imperceptibly send the moon’s orbit around the Earth off kilter, and make us all go slightly bonkers in our part of the world.