"One body two heads"

In what must be the biggest political tussle in seven decades of Nepal’s communist movement, the UML and the Maoists formally merged on Thursday to create the Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

The union was formally announced at a press meet in Kathmandu after registering the new party at the Election Commission. This is now the most powerful party Nepal has ever had with 174 seats in the 275-member Parliament, and can comfortably ride the country for the next five years. It can also amend the Constitution if one of the two Madhes-based parties backs it, to take the combined strength to third.

Leftist analyst Shyam Shrestha thinks the NCP is now one of the most powerful communist parties in the world: “Only China and Vietnam have communist parties more powerful than the NCP, there is reason to celebrate.”

The opposition Nepali Congress, which was the first elected party in Parliament in 1951 and governed Nepal for most of the period after democracy was restored in 1990, will now be further weakened. It has accused the united Left of dragging the country to communist authoritarianism. Shrestha dismisses “We are living in a modern democracy where dictatorship cannot thrive.”

Shrestha is upbeat that the emergence of a strong political force has effectively ended an era of political instability in Nepal. The unity drive was first announced before elections last October, but ran into trouble over power-sharing and leadership issues after the alliance swept polls.

After UML Chair KP Oli was sworn in as Prime Minister in February, Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal began lobbying for a “respectable” presence of his comrades in the unified party. “Respectable” was a code for Dahal’s demand that he should lead the united party, be prime minister in two-and-ahalf years after Oli, and all positions should be divided 50-50.

When Oli became too busy with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit last week, negotiations stalled. Dahal suspected Oli was no longer interested in unification, and was wooing the Madhesis. The Maoists even boycotted some of Modi’s events. But a two-hour meeting between Oli and Dahal on Wednesday cleared the air, and they hurried the unification process, timing the announcement for the 25th anniversary of the death of charismatic UML leader Madan Bhandari in a car crash.

The other hurdle was semantics: finally, the UML accepted the Maoists’ ‘People’s War’ and Maoists agreed to the UML’s ideology of ‘People’s Multi-Party Democracy’. It is not clear if Oli promised to help Dahal in the first general convention of the united party, or to relinquish prime-ministership halfway through his term. The new party’s Standing Committee has 45 members (23 from UML and 18 from Maoists) and 441 Central Committee (241 from UML and 200 from Maoists).

Ex-Maoist Gyanendra Shah says Dahal’s brief to his comrades about unification was unambiguously brief: “He did not talk much, he just told us how party committees will be formed, he may have been under pressure to publish the unification.”

Om Astha Rai
ILLIBERAL ILLS

Across the world from the Philippines in the United States, and in Central European countries like Hungary and Poland, we have seen worrying signs of democratic reversal. Even in open societies like the UK, Germany, France and India there has been a recent ascendancy of the racist right.

Extremism and populism have taken center stage as demagogues whip up xenophobia and bigotry to get elected in democracies that are abandoning a rule-based society. They are systematically gapping the free press, using the power of the social web to spread hate and lies, and encouraging violent extremism. Hungary’s Viktor Orban beautifully calls his country an ‘illiberal democracy’. Using the Trump administration as a shield, he is rolling back down Palestinians. Cambodia has just shut down its last independent newspaper.

The decline is not isolated, and it is not a temporary occurrence. The Freedom in the World Report 2018 notes that political freedom is in retreat across the globe. More than 70 countries have seen declines in political and civil rights in recent years, and there were gains in only half that number of nations.

The only recent silver lining is Malaysia, where the people last week voted out a bumbling corrupt and openly racist cabal, even though the electoral system had been rigged, and the judiciary stacked against the 2012-year old Mahathir Mohamad. Hopefully, Malaysia’s example will spread, and send a message to those struggling against despots: sooner or later democracy will prevail.

Even now, in many African states today there is open adulation for China’s economic growth and the Singapore miracle. This has led to a growing attraction for strong-man rule. Political and civil liberties are seen to be putting the brakes on the economy, and freedom is seen as a luxury that is keeping people poor. The emphasis is on economic and cultural rights, and citizens are asked to give up their basic freedoms while waiting. The state’s priority has become national security, fighting terrorism, stopping migration, to ensure stability and prosperity.

All this is now getting to sound disturbingly familiar in Nepal where the slogan of the ruling coalition that was elected last year is ‘prosperity through stability’. The adjective is made up of a moderate left party named after Marx and Lenin which is soon going to merge with former communist rebels who are inspired by Mao.

The UML, may have changed its spot to democratic Multi-Party Democracy law, but the CPN-MC has still not convincingly abandoned its ideology of revolutionary violence. It wants the People’s War to be glorified and enshrined in the guiding principles of the new Nepali Communist Party. There is no move towards transitional justice, and to say sorry.

Recently, we saw how easily both parties as well as the NC, now in the opposition, were bold hostages by their own appointees to the anti-corruption commission as it terrorised the press and dismantled the rule of law for three years. The warning to us is that Lokman Singh Karki can easily happen again.

Communists are guided by the principle of ‘Democratic centralism’ which is an anathema to federalism and devolution. And the ruling coalition is doing just that: centralising power in the PMO. The recently promulgated draft National Integrity Policy, while seeking to lay legitimate ground rules for the conduct of public officials and outside agencies, has some disturbing provisions.

As we report (Page 14-15) in this edition, the restrictions appear to be guided by the perception of aggressive proselytisation and donor funding for indigenous and excluded groups during the Constitution drafting process.

There may have been a need to regulate the proliferation of NGOs, and the government does need to keep track of where outside funds go. But some of the points in the draft are so open-ended that they seemed intended for control rather than regulation. The government now wants only foreign assistance in ‘hardware’ and not ‘software’, and is turning away aid on anything to do with inclusion, human rights and democracy.

Given the spread of the Chinese and Indian influence around the world, there is reason to be worried that ‘stability and prosperity’ could be a euphemism for control, and silencing dissent.

TRUST AND RESPECT

It is high time India became more sincere in dealing with Nepal, took a long-term view, respected Nepal’s sovereignty and implemented mutually-beneficial projects without any delays (A political ill, Om Krishna, in Express), in essence, discard the attitude and mindset of its colonial past, and become more efficient in cooperation.

Pusrotshon Muthry

Nepal buys electricity from India despite being a country with great potential for hydroelectricity. With proper sustainable hydro development, Nepal can be self-sufficient in energy and sell electricity to India, reducing the trade gap. Nepal needs dams to turn rivers, and also for Inland Navigation. If Nepal is connected to India’s National Waterway, it would change the trade scenario of the country.

Marcus Alpha

NO CITY FOR CYCLISTS

I used to cycle from Bhaktapur to Gokarna four times a week to attend lectures when I was an undergraduate student, and later in university (No city for cyclists, Sews Bhakta, #990). But due to the lack of bicycle lanes and over-speeding traffic, I had a few near misses. I still love to cycle, but congestion and other problems mentioned in your story make me fearful. Nonetheless, I’m thinking about resuming cycling on a bicycle.

However, roads are hazardous in the absence of policies that encourages cycling. I think the problem lies within the revenue that auto vehicles generate for the government.

Suman Lauria

BEST WISHES

Dr Lumbina Devkota, you are a role model, an icon and an inspiration (I want to live my last among friends, From the Nepali Press, nepaliwire.com). Your contribution is invaluable. You will live long.

Achyut Rai

TIP 5/12

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The 16-22 May 2008 issue of Nepal Times exactly ten years ago this week had a editorial of fans of Buddha Pabitra on the front page, full of furore. Today, that historic page is dry and abandoned after a fourteen restoration project by the Majari after. The tempo in the middle of Anil Pabitra seen in the picture was captured in the 2015 quake. The same image appeared on the front page 10 years ago was also carried a report from Anjuli Gupta of living among the devastating Sichuan earthquake that killed over 60,000 people. This week China is dealing with a quake and this reconstruction and rapid transformation of the towns in the seismic zone is an earlier precedent that seems years before the earthquake struck Nepal.

The date of Kasthura in the Kathmandu Valley three years later is still to resonate in Buddha’s decade on 11/10/2017.

ONLINE PACKAGES

PLASTIC NATION/CASH FROM TRASH

Why have mom and dad been there? With your5 big marijuana farm? The production and use of plastic signs in Kathmandu, and then Teahouse I was up there a year ago selling polyester fabric their signs and I’m just Pearl for me, now, there is growing local people and reducing plastic waste.

TRUST AND RESPECT

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A wealth of meaning:
How to make money in an unequal world

Only a handful of people in the world have more wealth than the rest of humanity. The number of acres behind their net worth is mind boggling, but what is even more difficult to understand is how people became so rich while others have nothing.

For example, every person in Kathmandu who has a few acres of land in Kathmandu is a very wealthy millionaire while a slum has hundreds of acres of land in rural Nepal but not worth much. This is why many Valley residents feel they do not need to work like the rest of the world.

There are others who watch television, see images of North America and Europe and feel that the moment they get to these places, they will become as wealthy as the people on screen. They also do not feel they have to work till they cross the immigration desk at Kathmandu airport.

Many of us are aware of a time when we were able to buy one ton of gold when our salaries were Rs1000 a month. These days, if you make about Rs5,000 a month you can buy only one kilo. If salaries were in gold, nothing would have changed. Twenty years ago, if you sold land and bought a vehicle, you now have no land and the vehicle is banned.

About 25 years ago we bought a piece of land near Bhaktapur and watched its’ value go up. We recently sold it and got many folds in return. With the money we made, we went to buy more land and realized we could only buy half the area we had sold.

Unlike in rural Nepal where a subsistence way of life is an option, urban poverty is really bad here because only cash can get you what you need to survive — including water in a bottle. With the expansion of roads, which are regarded as the ultimate symbol of development, the traditional namee has disappeared but are people off the better off and more wealthy. Mule train drivers have been replaced by truck drivers. What used to be a village where travelers spent the night are now only a few minutes to hours of drive in between and have lost their economic relevance.

Food and vegetables grown for local consumption are now out of reach of locals who have no cash. Remittances from overseas workers plays a crucial role in ensuring that families have cash to pay for their basic needs. In some parts of Nepal, tourism has helped add to the income stream.

Wealth creation becomes complex when we want to generate power from flowing rivers because it costs a lot of money up front and revenue does not come in for nearly a decade. There are market uncertainties which means you may not get the price you seek, or regulate who will not allow the power to go into another country. A particular country did not make the investment.

Wealth creation by making a watch using rocks from the ways of Mr. Everest for the dial. Religion and the fear of god seem to be a good means of wealth creation in the form of fees for rituals. Cold drinks, alcohol and processed food look like easy money makers as well. Nepal has a billionaire in the Forbes list who makes ready-to-eat noodles.

But most Nepalis, like billions others around the world, make a living buying and selling. Most get by with a scalded jigar or renting out floor space. Artists seem to do really well when it comes to value creation. They take a piece of rock or a sheet of copper and create a masterpiece that can fetch, huge returns. It is however not easy to find buyers. Most wealthy countries make money by selling military weapons, and preventing others from doing the same. They need to stay rich. Some people in Nepal and the world are rich because they take resources like land, trees, water, etc., minerals and people as a ‘free good’ and then monetize them. If you think wealth creation is complicated, wait till we discuss the extraction in the next installment.

Anil Chitrakar is President of Sidhdhyut

Crossing over in Freestyle

When Ford introduced its SUV EcoSport in Nepal in 2013, it combined luxury with a rugged handling in the country’s rough roads — a new combination. Now, in introducing a vehicle that feels like an SUV but does not dig such a deep hole into your pocket, Ford seeks to address the growing demand for affordable yet smooth rides.

Go Automobiles, Ford’s authorised distributor in Nepal, launched the latest global product, Ford Freestyle, a Compact Utility Vehicle (CUV) that combines the iconic design of a SUV with features Nepali customers look for in a car.

Go Automobiles’ Nest-Gen Figo, Figo Aspire, Figo Active, and the classic SUVs Endeavour and EcoSport, and the new Freestyle is the first CUV in the CUV range in Nepal.

“Ford specialises on bigger cars with more than 1,500cc, and the new Freestyle does not fall under that category. It is the smallest car ever made by Ford, specifically tailored for India and Nepal where the roads are rough and people demand compact cars,” says Akash Ghodha of GO Automobiles pictured, above.

At first glance, the Ford Freestyle has a masculine and sporty look with striking lines sweeping out front to back. The front bumper has an integrated skid plate and sculpted fascia sections that create a protective full-width beam element, accentuating Freestyle’s SUV look and credentials.

The model is fitted with three-cylinder 1.2T, TiVCT petrol engine, delivering 85ps power and had ground clearance of 190mm, the highest in the segment, making it able to easily negotiate the bumps on the Nagarkot road, for example. For safety, the car comes with Active Roll Over Prevention combined with Electronic Stability Control, to automatically detect potential rollover situations by applying brakes in individual tyres and decreasing engine torque. It also has six airbags and a Sync 3 infotainment system.

India aims to go completely electric by 2030, and Ghodha says: “We are waiting for Ford to support customers with after sales service like repair, maintenance and training as well. Only then will we be able to release their electric versions in Nepal, possibly in 2030. Until then, we are betting on this new crossover, fully confident that it will load the market.”

Ford Freestyle is priced at Rs 5,699,000.

Acharya wins trophy

Matthew Acharya won the 11th edition of Anantar ‘Turkish Airlines World Golf Cup’.

TURKISH AIRLINES OPEN
Kathmandu: Mattach won on 18th May at Golf Club, Girta will be following the Nepal Open at Nepal Open at 18th May. Turkey for the 2018 team slated for tomorrow.

Break the fast

Qatar Airways passengers fasting during the holy month of Ramadan will be offered a nutritious box filled with healthy options to break their for the specially designed ‘Turkish Karen’ meals will be offered at selected routes across the Middle East, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Malaysia.

Instant energy

Glacier, the instant energy drink based on 99.4% pure guarana, is now available in three different flavors, jazzy guarana, tangy lemon and mango. Filled with iron and calcium, the drink is supposed to help overcome summer lethargy and debilitation.

Road to Russia

Lance Blumenthal offers all its customers to exchange Russian rubles to win a trip to Russia and a ticket for the final match of the World Cup 2018 through an online campaign which requires registration before June 15.

Nordic and IME

Nordic International Bank signed a MoU with Global IME Bank, to provide

Global IME Bank
5% discount on speaker and facilities to the bank’s privileged customer credit card holders, its employees and their families.

New rules

Nepal Central Banking, the authorized distributor of Hero motorcycles and scooter in Nepal, has introduced a new rules.
New records, oxygen failure on Everest

It is that time of the year again when all eyes are on the top of the world, with mountaineers and Sherpas guiding making their final push to the top of Mt Everest. More than 160 mountaineers have already reached the top this season, and many more are on their way up.

Laxa Sherpa, the guide of the 22nd summit, gave information about the summit. The weather has improved and the climbing window is expected to remain open until 23 May.

“We have already seen some interesting new records, but we hope for more some more,” he said.

Wednesday turned out to be the big day with two Sherpas breaking their own records and setting new ones. A Chinese double amputee, Xia Boyu, also smashed the world record for successfully scaling Mt Everest.

On Thursday, Italian astronaut Maurizio Cheli became the first European, with a team to have flown in space and climbed the highest mountain on earth.

Kamiza Sherpa (see left), the second Summit chief, said "Kamiza Sherpa is the new legend, the new Appa Sherpa.”

While Lhakpa Sherpa was climbing to break her own record on Wednesday morning, others were dealing with oxygen failures. Some 26 climbers had to descend to fix their oxygen regulators (see page 8). Some Sherpa guides gave their oxygen regulators to clients, risking their own lives.

On his blog that everyone was safe but it was a new emergency. At least 15 of 19 oxygen bottle regulators had failed, making several teams give up their climbs. He confirmed the cylinders were replaced by Summit Oxygen (ISO), and it seemed to be a bad manufacturing batch.

Meanwhile, there have been two Sherpa deaths on Everest and Makalu. Some 853 climbers have attempted or are climbing 22 Himalayan peaks in Nepal this spring season, creating employment for 3,200 high-altitude guides and many thousands of porters. Of them, 346 climbers and most of the porters are on Everest. There are 15 Nepali women, including a female journalist, group, hoping to make it to the summit.

An expedition hopes to replicate NASA’s famous twin study that compared astronaut Scott Kelly’s body functions with his earthenbroch identical twin brother, by examining genetic changes in two American climbers climbing Everest this season while their twin brothers are at sea level. However, the Turin Ministry recently cancelled their permit after they skied from Camp 3 to 2, saying they needed a permit to do that.

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NATION

"I can do it 25 times"

Kamiza Sherpa, the previous record holder, climbed Mt Everest for the 22nd time this year.

The country needs the record, but not the man who makes the record,” Kamiza Sherpa said on 28 March in Kathmandu before he set off to climb Everest.

True to his word, the 48-year-old from Thame village of Solukhumbu summitted the world’s highest peak for the 22nd time on the morning of 16 May. And as the person who has climbed Mt Everest the most number of times, he made international headlines.

Kamiza Sherpa is a guide at Seven Summit Treks, and had started climbing from Camp 5 with nine Chinese climbers on Tuesday night, and reached the top on Wednesday morning. Before this, Appa Sherpa and Phurba Tashi Sherpa had jointly held the world record, with an impressive 21 times each on top of Everest. Appa and Phurba Tashi have repeatedly said they will probably not climb again.

Kamiza is a humble man, and often said he was not hungry for fame. “Many Sherpas have made records. Ang Rita Sherpa made a world record by climbing Everest 20 times without oxygen. But what is the point of such records?” he asks.

However, Ang Chiring Sherpa, former president of Nepali Mountaineers Association, says Kamiza Sherpa has made Nepal proud and he should be recognised.

“Now it is the country’s responsibility to figure out how to appreciate such a person,” said Ang Chiring Sherpa.

Kamiza Sherpa started mountaineering in 1992, and first summited Everest in 1999 as a guide. In 2009, 2010, and 2011, he climbed Mt Everest three times in a single season. His brother Lhakpa Rita Sherpa has also climbed Mt Everest 17 times.

Kamiza Sherpa, who had studied only up to Grade 4 in Thame Primary School, lives in a rented apartment at Budhida. His son studies in Class 12 while his daughter has just completed high school.

Worried about the safety of Sherpas who work in mountaineering, Kamiza Sherpa does not want his children to follow his footsteps. He says: “The government only cares about royalty from the mountains; it does not care about our future. We have to support our family from what we earn every season. Who will take care of our family if something happens to us?”

He says there may even be no Sherpas willing to guide an expedition up the mountains. Meanwhile, Kamiza Sherpa continues to climb. His friends encourage him, to get to the top for the 30th time. But he says, “I think I will make it 25 times.”
New records, oxygen failure on Everest

It is that time of the year again when all eyes are on top of the world, with mountaineers and Sherpas guides making their final push to the top of Mt Everest.

More than 160 mountaineers have already reached the top this season, and many more are on their way up.

Lakpa Sherpa, leader of Sherpa Expeditions, said in an interview with The Times that the mountain is expected to remain open until 23 May.

“We have already seen some interesting new records, but we hope for some more,” he added.

Wednesday turned out to be the big day with two Sherpas breaking their own records and setting new ones. A Chinese double amputee, Xinya Baya, also smashed the world by successfully scaling Mt Everest.

On Tuesday, Italian astronaut Maurizio Cheli climbed Mt Everest becoming the first European to have ever been in space and climbed to the summit.

Kami Rita Sherpa, the new legend, also broke a new record for the most Everest climb by a woman, setting the highest mountain on earth.

“Can do it 25 times”

Kami Rita Sherpa broke the previous record by climbing Mt Everest for the 22nd time this year.

The country needs the record, but not the man who makes the record,” Kami Rita Sherpa said, 28 March 9th at Kathmandu before he set off to climb Everest.

True to his word, the 48-year-old from the village of Solukhumbu summit the world’s highest peak for the 22nd time on the morning of 16 May. And as the person who has climbed Mt Everest the most number of times, he made international headlines.

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Kami Rita is a humble man, and often said he was not hungry for fame. “Many Sherpas have made records. Ang Rita Sherpa made a world record by climbing Everest 25 times without oxygen. But what is the point of such records?” he asks.

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The oxygen of mountaineering

The failure of oxygen cylinders this season on Mt Everest has forced expeditions to cancel their climbs

I have just returned from setting up a new oxygen factory in Khumjung in the Khumbu region to see my last column in this space. (For a few dollars more, #989, in print. It is also good to get feedback, and see impact. In another column two years ago, I had suggested that Thamel be pedestrianised.

Thamel is now pedestrianised, and it is a much better place.

It feels good to be right, but not always. Last week I warned that the unregulated oxygen industry was usual, with unmarked, uncertified old Russian cylinders still in circulation. I was prompted to write this because while filling such a cylinder, I found it to be leaking from the bottom, meaning the seal which holds it together was fractured. At best this cylinder will lose its oxygen by the time the user needs it. At worst it could explode.

We are used to leaking valves, and these can be fixed, but cylinders cannot be fixed. The unscrupulous will still sell such cylinders, not caring about the damage done to ordinary working people who support this industry and for the mountaineers who lose their dreams.

Then this happened. Yesterday I woke to the news that there have been 25 regulator explosions at 8,500m on Mt Everest this week. Teams have retreated from the mountain and their summit hopes have been dashed. (See page 2. Luckily no lives were lost, but it is too late this season to make another attempt. Five years ago while checking regulators I had one explode while filling it (picture above). The old regulator blew apart because the cylinder had been over-pressurised. I understand what these climbers have been through, except while I nearly lost my life I did not lose my dream.

Some of the climbers have sold their houses to get a chance to climb the highest mountain in the world, they are not all stupid rich people. I definitely am not, and I fulfilled my Everest ambition. It changed my life and made me appreciate all the more what I have. For these climbers who had to turn back, there may not be another chance.

Adrian Ballinger, the leader of the Everest north face climbing team affected by these oxygen failures, told me on Wednesday he is pulling out.

He said: ‘We need to educate clients and the mainstream on basic standards of safety and ethics, and then shame those that refuse to meet that standard. We also need to lobby China and Nepal to stop, require and enforce standards.’

We know that earthquakes happen, these are natural disasters. We have to be prepared for them, but accept it when it happens. What should not be accepted are potentially deadly things that you, we, the government, the industry have control over, and still allow to happen.

Someone must be accountable for the oxygen that failed to do its job, as climbers this season. Not for blame, but at least to ensure that it does not happen again and again.

Who is that someone? Revenue is being lost for the government which has no oversight or control over black market oxygen products being sold by unregistered companies, being filled who knows whose. This may suit some people because when it goes wrong there is no one to blame where did the cylinder come from, who filled it, with what?

It is easy to say what has happened here, the above are the facts to date. What has happened is never an engineer’s concern, but why did it happen and what can we do to be sure that it does not happen again? For this we, the Nepali climbing guides, and everyone else whose lives and livelihoods depend upon this amazing industry need government regulations and accountability.

The above relates to equipment that has been identified, and is now out of use. The rest of the equipment is fine, and many climbers are making successful climbs.

I echo here the brave words of Upendra Devkota, the neurosurgeon who is battling terminal cancer, in this paper last week: “Death is not so important. What is important is what the dead person leaves behind”.

Wise words that make me wish I knew the doctor. What do we leave behind, did we make anything better, what will our children say about us? Think about the future, their future.

Ted Atkins is former AVI Chief Engineer officer and works on mountain safety projects.

###

**Explosive Breathing:**
The author was injured five years ago when this oxygen cylinder exploded while a climb. Many climbers this year had malfunctioning oxygen systems and were forced to turn back from Mt Everest.

**Photos Tonight:**

Ted Atkins

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Reflect the colours of nature more accurately with high quality precision printing in state-of-the-art Jagadamba Press.
There was the battle of pens and the bliss of a kerosene stove from the kitchen tent. Poking my head out of the sleeping bag, I saw the huge bulk of Makalu silhouetted against the dawn sky. It had snowed all night, the moon and some of the stars were still out. There in the darkness, Voytek Kurtyka was hanging by one hand from a trekking pole.

It was the spring climbing season in 1981, and we were camped out on a moraine by the Barun during the march in to Base Camp. Kurtyka was planning an alpine-style ascent of Makalu’s unclimbed west face with his partner Alex Mackenzie. The weather was bad and the face was impossible. The two gave up, and returned in the autumn, but they were defeated again by a 500m rock overhang near the summit. Another Polish climber, Jerzy Kukuczka, made it to the top solo a few days later.

Bernadette McDonald, the Canadian author of ten mountaineering books, chronicles those Makalu expeditions and other climbs by one of the greatest alpinists of all time, Poland’s Voytek Kurtyka, in her new book, Art of Freedom. Even though they were mountaineers of the same generation from the same country, Kukuczka and Kurtyka’s approaches to climbing could not be more different.

McDonald writes how Makalu pressed the gap: “Junk was focused on summits, and Voytek was obsessed with style.” Kurtyka was a driven man, completely consumed by his climbing, and an ardent opponent of militaristic expedition-style climbing of Himalayan peaks. Attaining the summit was not so important for the reclusive Kurtyka, what was more important was how a climber got there.

A year after Makalu, Reinhold Messner invited Kurtyka to join him on Cho Oyu. But when he got to Base Camp, Kurtyka found out the climb was not going to be alpine style, but ‘seige style’ with high altitude porters, ropes and fixed camps.

Kurtyka tells McDonald in the book that he likes to climb ‘unleashed’. We read about his dislike for mountaineers who write in a ‘pretentious or self-aggrandizing style’. Kurtyka adds: ‘I will not see clearly that climbing is an art. I also see that advertising is a poison, while self-advertising is the oldest disease in the human soul.’

In a week when the assembly line jumaring mass-conquests of Mt Everest is reaching its annual climax, these lines have special relevance. Art of Freedom takes us back to the purity of climbing that Kurtyka believed like a religion - a style in which humans most mountains one-on-one.

Kurtyka’s approach to climbing is low key, humble and almost Buddhist, a complex antithesis to the chest-thumping, record-breaking race that it has become, especially on Everest. Naturally, Kurtyka is vehement about over regulation by governments intent on turning climbing into an industrial enterprise. He is actually proud of his many ‘illegal’ climbs.

He tells McDonald: ‘Being illegal is part of a creative life. Restrictions are mostly imposed by the forces of the world and they turn our lives into slavery. They ruin the sense of freedom. I am not a natural born rebel, but sometimes I fall in it is my duty, I hate every kind of rule.’

After returning to Kathmandu from Makalu in 1981, Voytek and Alex would go mountain-biking in Thamel, and come home to Patan after curfew. Because they did not want to wake up my parents, the two would climb up the drain pipes to the second floor ‘alpine style’ with the dogs barking at the intruders. Kurtyka would have taken a dim view of the cottage-garden reaction by Nepal’s tourism ‘authorities’ to Willis Regan’s and Matt Morris skiing from Camp 3 to Camp 4 last week. Did the new ‘rule’ decreed by the governors of mountaineering in Kathmandu to ban double axemanship from climbing since rescinded.

The danger is always there, and Kurtyka is one of the few who is still alive to tell the tale of alpine-style climbing of the big peaks. Kukuczka died on Lhotse South Face, and Mackenzie on Annapurna South Face.

In the book, Kurtyka tells McDonald why he thinks he survived: a combination of luck, an instinctive alertness to danger signals, or even ‘some idealistic notion of a reciprocal love between the mountain and him.’

Bernadette McDonald’s Art of Freedom takes us into the soul of a spiritual climber who sees in mountaineering a manifestation of nature in its purest form, a creative drive he calls ‘Crea’.

Art of Freedom is a brilliant portrait of one of the cleanest climbers of our time, and carries Lessons for a more moneyed era.

Industrial scale litter

Mukesh Pokhrel

The government's plastic bans have been repeatedly sabotaged by big businesses

World Environment Day 5 June

With plastic pollution becoming a global crisis, UN Environment (UNEP) is marking World Environment Day 2018 with a campaign #BeatPlasticPollution calling for collaborative action to change the way countries manage plastic pollution.

Another former Environment Minister Ganesh Shab admits that he tried but failed to implement the plastic ban in 2008. While being involved in a flagrantly solid waste clearance campaign, Shab realized that plastic bags constituted a large portion of the city’s non-biodegradable waste. In fact, Kathmandu Valley today produces more than 360 tons of plastic waste a day.

Former ministers, secretaries and other bureaucrats in the Environment Ministry interviewed for this article all confirmed that their initiatives to ban the production of plastic bags were sabotaged by industrialists who enjoyed political protection.

"They used all kinds of pressure and intimidations to ensure that the plastic ban was not implemented," says former minister Manabathar.

I experienced the coercion myself during my tenure," he suspects that officials of his own ministry involved in formulating a plastic ban directive in 2011 were conspiring to allow loopholes.

"Durga Prasad Dawadi, who is now Director General of the Department of Environment, says every time a minister started talking about a plastic ban to reduce the garbage burden, somehow the businessmen would get wind of it and arrive at the ministry with large delegations. He says the pressure came also from political party leaders.

Just a fortnight ago, four businessmen came to his office with a recommendation from the Mayor of a Forest and Environment Shakti. Basnet to clear 10 truckloads of waste cotton from Bangladesh stopped at Jaiyapura customs.

"I said I could not clear something harmful to the environment, and they threatened me. They said they would teach me a lesson for not obeying the minister," Dawadi recalls. He says similar tactics were used to revoke plastic bans in the past.

Another former Environment Secretary Krishna Gyawali says there is no excuse for the bureaucracy to let businesses off the hook. "If the law is weak, it is their job to make it stronger.

A notice in the gazette announced a ban on bags below 30 microns effective Nepali New Year on 14 April 2015. As with all previous directives, this one was never implemented. This time, the earthquake was used as the excuse, but ex-minister Ganesh Shah has continued industrialists were again behind it.

Plastic bag manufacturers petitioned the Supreme Court to overturn the ban. In 2015, however, the court ruled in favour of the government, saying that plastic bags were harmful to human health and the environment, and that the ban had legal basis.

Last year’s budget once again announced a ban on plastic bags. That decision was also soon forgotten. Towsis like Pokhara, Ramnagar and Dharan have also tried to implement plastic bag bans without success.

Dawadi says the government’s policy itself is contradictory. "How can the Ministry of Industry give licenses to plastic factories on the one hand, and the Ministry of Environment ban them?"

Sharad Sharma, Chair of the Nepal Plastic Producers Association, says it is natural for his industry to lobby against the ban. "We have invested billions with permission from the government, we have been paying taxes, you cannot ban plastic just because some NGOs oppose it."

He told Nepali Times. "If you want to close us down, we have to be compensated."

Environmentalists say the excessive use of one-time-use plastic bags clog up drains, spoil river banks, and release carcinogenic dioxins into the air when it is burnt. Thin plastic bags are blown away by the wind into farmlands and affect harvests.

The public is used to the convenience of plastic bags, however, and not enough has been done to raise awareness about its ban. Affordable alternatives to plastic bags and water bottles are also absent. Future bans must also include full wrappers and smaller instant noodle and candy packs, Dawadi says.

One way to reduce plastic use would be to tax it, or to put a price on plastic waste, as has been done in the Langtang National Park (see adjoining article).

Shopkeepers can also pay a fee, as shown by Chabahil and Big Mart which do not give away plastic bags. But the volume of plastic waste can be reduced if household and street garbage are sorted at source.

There is also an initiative to turn plastic bags into diesel by Rabin Dhakal at the Nepal Academy of Sciences and Technology (NAST). Although proven, it has to be up-scaled from a lab experiment to industrial production. On Monday, Kirtipur announced that it would discourage plastic bags, and is distributing 10,000 cloth bags as alternative. Lamahi of Dang has banned plastic cups and plates, and will soon ban bags. However, noodle and biscuit wrappers are still a problem.

Says environmental campaigner Shweta Tuladhar: “Yes, plastic waste is a huge problem. But with big store chains banning it and string public awareness, it is not all a flop.”

When Daniel Bursi first came to Nepal to work for United Nations to Nepal’s hydropower projects, he travelled all over Nepal and decided to dedicate his life for the education of Nepali children. He set up the non-profit group,
Plastic money

Conservation group pays Rs 1 for every discarded plastic bottle in Langtang to upcycle them

Samuel Johns in Langtang

Langtang Valley is just beginning to recover from the earthquake three years ago, but another disaster looms large here in the high Himalaya: The Plastic Crisis.

As the region rebuilds, tourists are flocking back to this stunningly scenic region, 7-hour drive north of Kathmandu. Every year, about 15,000 trekkers visit the Langtang National Park, using up and leaving behind 200,000 plastic water bottles. A conservative estimate puts the number of discarded bottles in Langtang Valley alone at 5 million.

It takes just three seconds to throw away a plastic bottle, but it will take 450 years for it to biodegrade. The plastic will be around for seven more generations of Nepalis by the banks of the Bhote Kosi (picture, above).

But here in Langtang survivors of the earthquake are building a new beginning, they have understood the importance of keeping this jewel clean and safe. These mountains are an ancient and rich repository of the earth's heritage, with huge aesthetic and ecological values in itself, if protected, can also provide economic benefits from trekking.

The Partnership for Sustainable Development (PSD) is a Nepali advocacy group involved in the retrieval and recycling of plastic trash in cooperation with the Kyanjum Gompa Langtang Society. PSD is also partnering with Sustainable Mountain Architecture to build a model pavilion entirely of plastic bottles in Rasuwa to raise public awareness. It supports the work of Nepali scientists to turn plastic waste into diesel. All this may seem like a drop in the ocean compared to the 3,000 tons of solid waste daily, much of it plastic, that Kathmandu produces. But every drop counts.

In 2017 PSD launched a simple scheme to pay Rs1 for every PET bottle. About 15,000 bottles per month collected from Langtang are dispatched to Himalayan Plastic in Pokhara where they are recycled to make educational material. The whole initiative is funded and fueled by the economics of recycling and providing desperately needed employment, wages, and long-term support in Langtang, where 400 people lost their lives in the earthquake.

Cultivating a circular economy around waste, especially plastic, is one way to tackle the impact of the quakes on tourism. It creates jobs, local employment, and local responsibility for waste that would otherwise litter the environment.

Thupden Namam has been hard at work for the past seven months collecting, sorting, cleaning, and storing the 500kg of plastic bottles a month that are trashed in Himalayan Plastic. The 1000-litre drums are full to the brim with sorted plastic, reliable for the next shipment. Nordstrom stores the leftover mix of sugo-soda bottles and minerals water bottles supplied to trekkers in the valley. You name the brand and they have all been salvaged from the banks of rivers in Langtang Valley: Hailey, Natural Nepal Water, Kinley, Aqua, Coke, Sprite.

Our slogan ‘Langtang Himal, Ramoche Himal’ seeks to spread environmental consciousness and clean trails, and help the tourism economy. Convincing the locals is no easy matter, and sometimes things move slow.

Recycling is not only an option for keeping the Himalaya clean, but can also be a modest income stream for local people. The 100 tons of plastic thrown away actually represents Rs 7 million, if it can be collected for recycling.

Slowly, the message is spreading: why throw bottles in the river if you can recycle them? Even better, why recycle them if you can upcycle?

Samuel Johns studied geography at the University of Oxford and ABC in Canada and writes about the Himalaya in the environment.

Himalayan Life Nepal and its work, Burdi and Nepali colleague Channen Seimal spent most of their time fundraising from donors. There must be a self-sustaining way to pay for a child’s school, they thought. What could be a social entrepreneurship activity that could raise money for children? At first they thought of making chemical-free soaps for Pokhara’s hotels, and while planning for it noticed

mountains of plastic waste piled high along streets in the scenic city. Six years ago, no one had really thought you could make money recycling plastic. But Burdi and Seimal came up with a feasible plan and registered a Himalayan Life Plastic Pvt Ltd in the Pokhara Industrial Estate with an initial investment of Rs60 million.

The factory now employs 65 workers to buy discarded PET bottles collected from Kathmandu, Pokhara, Syangja, Tanahu and Langtang (see story, above) and recycle them into pellets for reuses. The business model is quite simple: discarding transparent PET bottles are bought for Rs6.15 per kg, processed into pellets and sold to other plastic industries for reuse at Rs11 per kg, which is much cheaper than the raw material they import for Rs200 per kg of pellets.

“Using recycled pellets means there is less plastic garbage in the environment, plastic industries have cheaper raw materials, and it reduces Nepal’s import bill,” says managing director Prakash Pradhan of Himalayan Life.

Ironically, one of the biggest problem is competition from Indian recycling companies who source plastic trash from Nepal in bulk and have the advantage of an economy of scale. There is criticism that the plastic is being recycled to make other plastic, but that overlooks the fact that the environment is rid of plastic trash. Pradak calls this ‘upcycling, not recycling’.

Ashok Skarpaha of Green Society Nepal argues: “Vartmata like these need government support. They clean up the environment, reduce the import bill, create employment, pay taxes, and still make a profit that they plough into children’s welfare.”
EVENTS

**Byoga**
An hour-long session to experience beer with yoga. Breath, sip and stretch. 19 May, 4-5pm-6pm, Park Village Resort, Budhaniketana, Rs.500, 9813385456, 9847139932

**Seminars with Rah**
Rah Sharma, director of photography of Sanschara, is in Kathmandu to inspire young filmmakers. Hear his experience of filming the Nepal horror movie and learn from his techniques. 19 May, 1-4pm, Nepal Film Development Board, Chabahil, 01 4471537

**Hike out**
One day hikes, Godavari-Lakuri-Shangrila, on Saturday, and Bhaktapur/Kathmandu-Gumlang-Shivapuri on Sunday for small groups led by a trusted guide. Register online for the package. 19-20 May, 6:30am, Outdoor Adventure Center Nepal, Thamel, Rs.1,200, 9813360155

**Jammin’ Thursday**
A place to meet fellow musicians, play a few tunes with them, or listen to their making music. 20 May, 7-10pm, Akebar, Jhokkrakhet, Rs.500, 9813360155

**Dog socialisation**
A call out to all dog owners to bring along their pets for tread, trains, trots, games, guru mantra, and ice-cream. 19 May, 8am-2pm, Around the Corner, Randan, Rs.2000, 9813360549

**Mindful art**
Michael D. Gordon, Fullbright student, researcher of painting, and curator of ‘Sacred Survivors’ speaks on the contemporary art of Thangkali and Pasbya painting in Nepal. 21 May, 5pm onwards, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Beder Motel Residential, 01 4010482

**Photography workshop**
A 10-day workshop on photography, focusing not just on techniques but also on innovation and perspectives. Beginners with a digital SLR, digital compact cameras or mobile phone are encouraged to register by 21 May. 22-31 May, 7:30am, Aranina, Sayab SEXO, Rs.500, 9813377779, 9832340590, aranina@gmail.com

**Neetesh Jung Kunwar**
A music session with Kathmandu’s youngest, most popular and happening artist Neetesh Jung Kunwar. 19 May, 6-7pm, Garden, Dorje Sangmo

**Fun Café**
Get a bite of a flavorful buffet brunch at the Café after taking a dip at the pool to beat the blazing summer heat. Also enjoy a complimentary cocktail or mocktail with the package. Badalgun Hotel Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Rs.220 (adults), Rs.170 (children below 12 years), 9813361818

**The Coffee Shop**
Follow the popularity of last year’s event, ‘Mindful Coffee’, in association with one of the most-visited cafes in the city with a special menu with messages in every item, from drinks, main course to desserts. Happily indulging in a pleasant atmosphere, Durbar Marg, 01 4271111

**Kava Restaurant**
Discover the culture of Haidarabad through traditional music and Andhra Pradesh delicacies specially curated by Chef Deepak and his team. 20 May, 6-9pm, Tastefully by Marriott, Thamel, Rs.1,650, 9813971799

**Capitol Grill**
This American style diner offers a large assortment of appetizers and entrees to suit every palate. Capitol Grill offers 30% off on all food from 20-30 May. 9813360155, capitolgrillkathmandu@gmail.com

**Lahka’s Chulo**
Nepali dish, Newari Khut, Swiss Rosti, Italian Fusilli and Thai Green Curry. Lahka’s chulo offers a variety of cuisines to offers. Grill and chill grown at this easy restaurant is to die-for. Jhokkrakhet, Rs.500, 9813360155

**Speakasy ft. Lindy Hop**
Speakasy plays tunes from the swing era to get you to dance along with Lindy Hop donates at the ‘Swing Night’. Don’t forget to put on your vintage looks on. 18 May, 7-10pm, Akebar, Jhokkrakhet, Rs.500, 9813360155

**Open mic for Dylan**
Open mic night dedicated to Bob Dylan in celebration of 77th birthday. The host Krauser, will accompany you on a ride full of nostalgia. 20 May, 10pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9813377779, 9832340590

**Hyatt Regency**
Enjoy your weekend brunch by the pool with family and friends and a wide spread of vegetarian and non-vegetarian buffet featuring Barbacoa, sashimi, antipasti and a work station. 30-May, 12:30-4pm, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, Budhanilkantha, Rs.250 (right), 01 5572104

**Budgets**
**OUR PICK**

**DEADPOOL 2**
Opens In Kathmandu on 17 May

**GETAWAY**
Our Pick

**AIR QUALITY INDEX**

KATHMANDU, 11 - 17 MAY

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**AIR QUALITY INDEX**

The point to note is this week’s rain brought down the average daily air quality index in Kathmandu city center to the ‘Moderate’ for two days and plan for three days for the first time this year. The Madanpur and the area around the Stupa and park were below 5. It is worth noting that separate kits are used for each other, which makes it difficult to compare raining days off. After rain, they were consistently 1169 and above.

https://np-air-quality.gov.np/
The life and times of Arniko
The cultural legacy of Nepal's famous son can still be seen across East Asia

Sewa Bhattarai

From the 12th century, the Nepali artist Arniko is famous for his contributions to Buddhist architecture and sculpture in Tibet and China. His influence is still visible in the architecture of the White Pagoda in Beijing, which was built by Arniko. The pagoda was constructed in the 12th century and is a fine example of Arniko's style. The White Pagoda is located in the Beihai Park in Beijing and is one of the most famous landmarks in the city.

Arniko, born in the 12th century, was a master sculptor and architect who is credited with the construction of the White Pagoda. He was born in what is now modern-day Nepal and was trained in the art of sculpture and architecture by his father, an influential Nepali sculptor. Arniko is known for his ability to incorporate Nepali artistic traditions into his work, creating a unique style that is both traditional and innovative.

In 1235, Arniko was invited to China by the Mongol leader Kublai Khan to create a massive temple complex in the city of Shangdu. The temple complex, known as the White Pagoda, was constructed on a ridge overlooking the city and was designed to be a symbol of Kublai Khan's power and influence.

The construction of the White Pagoda was a massive undertaking, and Arniko was responsible for designing and overseeing the construction of the temple complex. He was also responsible for creating the intricate carvings and sculptures that adorn the temple. The White Pagoda is a masterpiece of Buddhist architecture, and it was considered one of the most important works of art of the 13th century.

The influence of Arniko's work can still be seen today in the architecture of many temples and shrines in Tibet and China. His style is characterized by a blend of Nepali and Chinese architectural elements, creating a unique style that is both traditional and innovative. Despite the passage of time, the White Pagoda continues to be a symbol of the cultural and artistic legacy of Arniko, a man whose influence has endured for centuries.
The Party

Last week’s columns lamented the reviewer’s plight when having a small facility of recent films to choose from, a drought that comes a few times a year. At this point, I revert to a store of contemporary films that were pushed aside, but are not to be missed.

Last week’s Faces Places was one of these neglected films. This week, I’d like to bring attention to Sally Potter’s The Party—a deep, rich, tragic-comedy that came out in 2017, and was considered by many to be one of the truly superb films of the past year.

If you have missed Sally Potter’s films, and even a cinema person, you must go back and find them. Potter is an artist trained in dance, theater, and cinema, who happens to practice largely in the cinematic medium. Over the years, she has become legendary for her complex and captivating films that include classics like Orlando (1992), and The Tango Lesson (1997) — to name two.

Last year, Potter released this intimate, seven-actor only, living room drama starting the cream of thespians, her fellow British compatriots that include Timothy Spall, Kristen Scott Thomas, Emily Mortimer, and Gillian Murphy. The film, a tense, darkly comic drama, centres around a special lunch that is arranged by Kristen Scott Thomas’s character, Janet, who has just been appointed to the post of shadow Minister of Health. Her husband, Bill, played by Timothy Spall, sits in their living room playing records as Janet prepares her celebratory lunch, and fields congratulatory phone calls from friends, acquaintances, and her secret lover.

As their friends arrive, the tight knit group talk about Gert’s ideologies, beliefs and hopes for the country now that Janet is in a position to make a difference, and field kitchen fires, tone fires, and many other crises that emerge moment after moment, putting everyone on edge, and necessitating nail biting, nervous laughter from the viewers.

This is the sort of writing that one might expect from the famous 20th century playwright turned film-maker Martin McDonagh, but Potter, who wrote the screenplay single-handedly proves to be adept at yoking together humour and tragedy, giving backbone to the film that another more superficial writer-director would have failed at.

The film, shot entirely in black and white, within the confines of the seven-person ensemble, and Janet and Bill’s lower ground floor home, is almost made suit for the stage than cinema. Yet the entire of these brilliant actors blossom in front of the camera, and the film comes to life, leaving all of us wondering what the heck is going on and how things might end—making for a truly refreshing film from the mind of one of the great art-house directors of our time.

REMEMBRANCE: Prime Minister K P Oli and Madhavi Devi Bhandari plant a pine sapling at Jawalakhel on Thursday to mark the 25th death anniversary of UML leader Madan Bhandari and Jharna Astiti.

ANOTHER CRASH: Makalu Air’s single-engine Cessna 208B Grand Caravan cargo aircraft crashed in Humla on Wednesday morning, killing both pilots. The crash occurred at an altitude of 4,000m, 15km south of Simikot.

MUST SEE

Sophia Pande

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TURKISH AIRLINES

NEARLY THERE: Mountain rescue on the summit ridge of Mt Everest early morning this week, among whom is Australian Steve Plain who completed his 7 Summits World Speed Record in 171 days by being at Everest Base Camp.

LET IT FLY: Turkish Airlines Flying Chef Selah Aksen Seger and Country Manager Abdullah Tuncer recently presented awards to the winner of Turkish Airlines World Golf Cup 2018. Kathmandu qualifiers Madhav Acharya (centre) on Saturday at Pokhara Golf Club.
Women conservationists brave discrimination, and the wild

Female environmentalists struggle against gender stereotypes as they work to save Nepal’s nature

Mukesh Pokhrel in
Himal Khushapatra
13-19 May

When Madhuri Karki, then chief
of the District Forest Office in
Bhaktpur, introduced herself to
the CDOS in Chitwan, he asked,
shocked: “A woman forest officer?”
Karki was the first female forest
officer in the country, and those
were the days when the proportion
of women in the Department of
Forest was so small, Karki recalls:
“There was a sense of people who
came to watch us as if we were
animals in a zoo.”

Twenty years on, Karki is
under-secretary in the department,
but things have not changed
much. The number of women in
conservation has gone up, but the
perception that being a forest officer is a man’s job still remains.

Sarawati Sapkota was 18 when
she started working as a
national park officer. The enthusiasm for her
first job soon turned bitter when she
got only two pairs of uniforms
when the male officers all got three
pairs every year. She was the only
woman among 15 staff members.

“It was a way of showing
me that they thought I was not
capable,” recalls Sapkota. “Instead
of trying to understand the issues,
women face working in national
parks, and trying to make the
workplace female-friendly, people
treated us as a part of the problem.”

This is all very familiar to other
female conservation officers here.
They work equally as hard as the
men, if not more, to contribute to
the protection and conservation of
wildlife, but are not given the same
responsibilities or trust.

The working conditions are
challenging, living alone in the
middle of the jungle, patrolling
with Army soldiers, being on call
all the time, being close to wild
animals, having to climb trees and
do physically challenging work.
This has given people the notion
that women are not suitable for this
type of work.

But today Karki, Sapkota and
others are breaking the stereotypes.
There are currently 86 female forest
officers in the Wildlife and Forest
Conservation Department. Women
officers are not only doing well,
but are rising up the ranks in the
conservation field.

Pratibha Karkabati worked in
Chitwan National Park soon
after joining, and was posted in
Mégahuli, an area that used to be
severely affected by wild elephant
attacks. She used to stay up all
night, patrolling and securing the
village perimeters from marauding
wild elephants. She says, “Once
you get used to duty, there is no
distinction between male and
female. We all have to work equally
hard.”

It is because of such dedication
that women officers have earned
the grudging respect of their
male colleagues. People were
initially hesitant to have women in
charge of their community
forests, demanding male officers
instead. But women like Madhuri
Karki, held on, determined that
they could do the job just as well.
People gradually realised that
female officers are not only capable
and qualified for the job, but that
they also understand forest related
issues better.

Rathna Wagle, who has been
working in conservation, says the
main problem for women is not
the threat of wild animals or the
physically challenging work, it is
the attitude of men towards women.

Says Wagle, “There needs to be
a major shift in the way men view
women in this field.”

But she and others have
taken the discrimination and
male comments in their stride,
undeterred by the physically
arduous nature of their work and
the threat of wild animals.

Says Sarawati Sapkota:
“We take it all as a given, but
unless male officers change
their behaviour and attitude,
more women will not join this
profession.”

JOKES APART: The unification of UML and CPN-MC parties has given
cartoonists much fodder. Two recent cartoons published since the
parties signed a unity agreement in February.
The government's new guidelines for dealings between Nepalis and foreign donors raises hackles

Om Astha Rai

For detailed guidelines from the National Integrity Policy paper, go online.

don't buy Nepali Times.
Subscribe.
(and get a free ride on Chandragiri Cable Car)

The government's new guidelines for dealings between Nepalis and foreign donors raises hackles.
Govt issues draft guidelines for public hygiene

Now that we have a government if the people, by the people, and for the people, we can be fairly confident that there will be stability and prosperity for those in office. Trickle-down economics will ensure that ill-gotten wealth will finally trickle down to the grassroots at some point in our country’s glorious future.

And speaking of trickle down, the government has just laid down strict new guidelines about how Nepalis should conduct themselves with regards to personal and public hygiene under the new federal Constitution.

Nepalis have a right to pick and can be seen doing this in public: on public transport, in offices, and on sidewalks even if they don’t exist, at all times of day and night. Under current law, anyone can nippick anyone else as long as it is consensual.

Since looking for love on someone else’s face is as indicative of some degree of mutual interest, it is frowned upon if it involves two or more individuals of the same sex. It is perfectly acceptable, however, to approach a stranger sitting next to you in an overnight flight to Sharjah, and, after necessary introductions, start picking facial hairs from each other’s faces. The new draft law allows nipping in public as long as it does not harm the national interest, or disturb Nepal’s socio-economic harmony.

Like smoking, breaking wind in public places is frowned upon in the national interest under the new guidelines. Entomologists are made for an acne crisis in emerging economies but only if the perpetrator in question has a national ID card or valid visa to prove eligibility to blow his or her own trumpeter in Nepal’s air space. However, commands will be scrambled if stink bombs are found in Cabinet Meetings or during Parliamentary Hearings.

Exempting belly button lint is now legal for all age groups, genders, and at all times. This decision has been taken to boost the pashmina industry which has been suffering from a crippling shortage of new material. Similarly, civil servants both in federal and provincial ministries will be hereby allowed to mince ear wax during office hours, and also on national holidays, so as to make the country self-sufficient in wax.

Toothpicking is another national activity and because there are no rules governing how people with advanced toothache should pick their teeth in polite company, the new Code of 
of other body parts. Suffice to say that the draft guideline has adopted a fatter line attitude about expelling body fluids in public. According to calls from nature it is now allowed anywhere along the East-West Highway where there is a mobile signal. This will curb fertiliser imports and boost organic agriculture.

Under the guidelines, Nepalis are now also allowed to legally clear their threats in public. This is traditionally done with a quiet intake of breath to dislodge the primary target in the oropharynx, pneumatically clear the encased material into an aerosol globule, and then, with the same technology used in shoulder-fired heat-seeking Stranger missiles, eviscerate this biological weapon at an innocent bystander.

The favourite male Nepali past-time of rummaging through the toolbox in public is now permissible by law. Immigration officials can, in full view of arriving passengers, scratch the cuhch as long as it does not violate the Vienna Convention of 1963 and its later amendments. And the Asa is gratified to note that in the spirit of Public-Private Partnership, this provision in the National Hygiene Policy also allows those with a posterior motive to attend to urgent private itches in public.