Next week as Nepalis celebrate Tihar, the festival of lights, few will remember that it will mark the second anniversary of the end of power-shedding power cuts. Sometimes lasting up to 18 hours a day, the load-shedding increased the people’s hardships and crippled the economy. The man credited for ending power cuts, Kalpana Ghising of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) said this week: “Light up your houses this Tihar, there is enough electricity.”

The NEA estimates that demand next week will peak at 1,270 MW, but Ghising says there is enough supply from domestic generation and Indian imports to meet it.

The reason for Ghising’s confidence is that 300 MW has been added this year. His efforts to manage supply and cut leakage have increased capacity, and the Hills Koshi reservoir is full. Even all this would not have ensured enough power — the real reason there will not be a dark Tihar is because of electricity imports from India.

This year, Nepal’s electricity demand reached 1,287 MW, but domestic generation never exceeded 525 MW. The shortfall was made up by importing up to 760 MW of electricity from coal-fired thermal plants in Bihar. Even with that, industries and some districts still suffered power cuts.

The end to load-shedding has come at great environmental and economic cost. The average per capita carbon footprint of Nepal is still low, but it has doubled because of fossil energy bought from India. The electricity import bill this year added 8.2 billion to the Rs150 billion Nepal was already spending to buy petroleum products from India.

The government defends the power import, arguing that it is only a stopgap measure and transmission lines built to import electricity from India can later be used to export Nepal’s surplus power to the Indian market.

Former Minister of Water Resources Bijay Gyawali says that is not likely to happen because Nepal’s electricity demand is growing 100MW a year, and there is a lot of suppressed demand that not even big projects like Tamka Koshi (600MW) can cover.

Instead of building cross-border transmission lines, Gyawali urges the NEA to focus on connecting small hydro projects to the national grid to meet future domestic growth in consumption for cooking and transportation.

Sadly, even while importing electricity generated from dirty coal from India, NEA cannot buy clean hydropower from private plants like the 5MW Khani Kola because they do not have transmission lines connecting them to the grid.

 Says one hydropower investor: “This is the irony of it all: we want to sell our electricity to NEA, but it is buying power from India.”

Om Astha Rai

The cost of light

JAKA/GSK
CLIMATE CLIMAX

Forget the horror movies, no more science fiction, stop economic growth. Hollywood has the real thing coming to a planet near you. If things aren’t scary enough, the latest report from the UN’s intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released in Incheon earlier this month paints a terrifying picture of our planet dying fast.

This year’s record heat waves and droughts across Europe, Australia, Japan and the United States. Every new hurricane and typhoon breaks world records for wind speed. The hottest years since records started being kept were in the last 15 years, but 2018 was just a trailer of what is to come.

If the current pace of warming continues, millions will start dieing in heat waves across northern India and sub-Saharan Africa by the mid-21st century. Droughts, floods and storms will be even more intense and frequent, and there will be water shortages leading to starvation and famine. Coral reefs will all die, affecting fish populations. Sea level will rise to engulf coastal cities, a fourth of Bangladesh’s land area will go underwater, the Maldives will disappear. Nepal’s mountains and glaciers will lose much of their permanent ice.

And that is probably the best-case scenario if warming cannot be capped at 1.5° by 2050. In reality, it will probably exceed 2°. By the end of the century, we are looking at average global temperatures of 4° warmer – at this rate, we should replace the term climate change with “climate collapse”.

Many of us have been writing about the climate for the past decades have been called “alarms” or “fear mongers,” but this time it is the scientists who are panicking. The reason is that at a time when action on emission reduction is urgent, popular climate deniers are being ejected in democracies across the world. It is getting so scary, citizens and politicians are burying their heads in the sand.

These alarming changes have happened with just an average 1° warming since the industrial age. The IPCC report makes clear that in the next decades, whether the warming is 1.5° or 2° will make a world of difference – 1.5° means best lives will be less severe, meaning millions will not die, the polar ice caps will not melt as fast, fewer plants and animals will become extinct, sea levels will not rise by as much, fewer coral reefs will be bleached. However, the report warns that governments only have 12 more years to implement measures so that global warming will be less than 1.5°.

Now that we know how bad things are, what are we going to do about it in Nepal? For years we have argued that since we did not create the problem, and what we do is not going to save the planet, we should just try to adapt. But, as a new report State of Climate Action: Nepal shows, climate change in Nepal is not something to take mitigation action – not so much to slow global warming, but to save the country’s economy from collapse.

Despite international treaties Nepal has signed, and successful governments paying lip service to a renewable economy, the country’s fossil energy inputs are soaring, feeding unrelenting electricity production from thermal plants in India. Solar and biomass power plants have languished, and there has been nearly no tangible progress on public electric transport.

Nepal’s dependence on fossil fuel for sustainable future is sluggard, and indeed often regressive building towards more fossil-fuel addiction,” the report concludes.

The most glaring gap in sustainable harnessing of Nepal’s hydropower. Chronic governance failure and sheer stupidity of our rulers have resulted in Nepal now importing half-1electricity from Indian coal-fired plants, doubling our carbon footprint. New hydropower plants are expected to be commissioned in the next two years, but these will barely meet suppressed demands and since they are all run on river-run schemes, the winter power shortage will continue.

The number of vehicles is nearing 3 million, with public transport vehicles making up less than 3% of the total, and the number of electric vehicles is negligible. There is weak political will to promote more efficient and renewable public transport because of the lobbying power of bus syndicates. Although many electric vehicles have been slammed (see page 48), there is no sign of a proactive strategy to wean from fossil-fuel based public transport.

All this is impacting public health due to pollution from two-wheelers and lack of emission controls. The poor condition of roads and highways is hampering efficiency of vehicular transport, but has increased pollution loads.

More worrying is that Nepal’s annual spending on petroleum products has more than doubled since the last two decades, the share of trade imbalance with India. (See page 14-15)

Flawed energy policy is not just ruining the environment and bankrupting the country, it is also increasing Nepal’s political vulnerability to the outside world.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

In the 4th issue of Nepal Times on 31 October 2008, the editorial deal with the conduct of government towards the election of the head of the nation and the national army. The government and the president are now ready to go to war in any situation, but there is no more mention in the primary army. The要加强 the new head of the committee and the cabinet of the national army. The legislature will be free. Nepal Times has not mentioned a person to the office.

The contract of a country under the leadership of Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) is a major achievement. The country is not just in the war, it is also in the peace.

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Sewa Bhattrai

Chhetri retorted, “Me three!” Host Anil Shahi joined in on the mirth with “Me four, me five!” The audience roared.

This was the latest example of how little understood (or misunderstood) the #MeToo movement in Nepal is. How harassment of women is accepted as normal, and victims do not have platform to protest.

A year after American actress Alyssa Milano went on Twitter to ask victims of Harvey Weinstein to use the hashtag, the hashtag finally arrived in Nepal, but only after India was rocking with protests. Bollywood musicians, journalists, actors, and former editor and now interim N. M. Adbar who had to step down.

In Nepal, while the movement was debated on social media and some women including journalists Sudha Shrestha and Meena Kaini and theatre artist Anchika Karki have spoken up, only one person has been named. Former journalist Rashmi Pratap and Upendra Mahatram accused Provincial 3 minister and former Kathmandu mayor, Keshav Shrestha, of harassing them.

Doubts have been raised for women to speak out even though the #MeToo movement has made its accusations credible for the first time. But most Nepali women with horrific accounts of mistreatment and cruelty see outside the public sphere, or do not want to speak out because of stigma.

Leaving aside rape and domestic violence, even workplace abuse of power that #MeToo has been associated with has not come out. Long before #MeToo, actresses Sten Karki in 2002 and Jessica Khatlia in 2012 committed suicide after their nude images were leaked — indicating that sexual abuse has been rampant in Nepal’s entertainment industry.

Belabared Laws
As the #MeToo movement gained momentum, questions have been raised over laws relating to sexual crimes. Nepal’s legal system is not very effective in handling sexual abuse cases.

Many have professional de facto “key men” in law enforcement (networks and informers). This includes even journalists and politicians. This means that even justice workers are themselves victimised by corruption and lack of knowledge.

“The #MeToo movement has lost some of its momentum, as other campaigns against abuse like #PledgeForAbuse and #RageAgainstRape remain more effective on social media. The possibility of #MeToo movement helping creating justice for victims in Nepal remains dim.”

But Nirmala Sharma, Chair of the Centre for Investigative Journalism, has not lost hope. “Twenty years ago, when women activists demanded equal property rights for daughters, people laughed. But today we have that law,” she says. “Likewise, most women have not been heard of #MeToo, some may not speak up because of fear of #MeToo coming out. There is a need to create a totally different culture where the victim can speak out.”

Data-driven tourism
As a conference in Turin, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) introduced a Tourism Trends Report. Big data analytics are bringing together the ecosystems of tourism innovation and raising the standards in the digital agenda. Panels debated how open data sources are now ready for businesses, along with how to stimulate venture capital and greater gender equality in tourism and technology.

IMF report
The International Monetary Fund (IMF) issued an annual report which showed the worsening state of Nepal’s economy from the 2015 earthquakes and blockade, as growth rate declined 2.6% and inflation averaged 4.2% in 2015/16. Two successive accommodative monetary policies, with unresponsive fiscal and monetary policy, a pickup in reconstruction activity, and moderately improved electricity supply are credited for the growth. For FY2016/17, the projection of growth is at a steady-state 3% and inflation to pick up to 5% as arrears begin to run out against capacity constraints.

Dust
Dust, a Nepali documentary film about child labour in brick factories in Nepal was participating in the 1st Global University Film Awards in Hong Kong from 7-9 November. The film is 55 minutes long and has three chapters. It also circulated in the 2nd International Film Festival in Portugal, screening up four awards.

#TheyToo
Recent #MeToo accusations barely scratch the surface of widespread hidden abuse of women in Nepal

W

American actress Alyssa Milano went on Twitter to ask victims of Harvey Weinstein to use the hashtag, to bring attention to the #MeToo movement, and to begin a dialogue about sexual abuse in the industry. The hashtag finally arrived in Nepal, but only after India was rocking with protests.

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**Times**

2-8 November 2018 #938
Recreating Tiger Tops in the tropics

The beginnings of Borneo Rainforest Lodge in Sarawak followed a the Chitwan model from Nepal

I
never met any of my time in Sarawak, but the Penan people were one of Asia’s last true nomadic hunter-gatherer groups, championed by anthropological and human rights activists against being settled by modern Malaysia during the early 1990s.

SO FAR SO GOOD
Lisa Choegyal

Sheltering from the rainforest downpours and damp under-planted leaves and twig canopies, they were skilled weavers making rattan mats and baskets. Hunting with blowpipes, and eating plants and small animals, the Penans were noted for practicing monogamy which means never taking more than necessary. They survived in the ever-shrinking patches of rainforest that had evaded the devastating decades of logging that made British Borneo, later Malaysian Borneo, wealthy.

Ironically, it was a Malaysian logger who first invited me to Borneo in 1991. Rudy Tangi Kinjil was one of the ‘Big boys’, head of Sabah State forestry and a stalwart of Malaysia’s timber industry but remarkable in that he came from a local tribe, the Kadazan-Dusun, and had risen through the ranks. Rudy wanted help create a natural history lodge, and had decided that it should be modelled on wildlife conservation concepts pioneered by Tiger Tops Nepal, but adapted to its tropical Borneo environment.

Rank in the deep leather seats of Rudy’s vast silver BMW, we drove the private gravel logging roads into the back blocks of Sabah through a green tunnel of towering trees as he showed me the reality of his world. Where the trees had been felled, there were great glaring piles of open light. I was horrified by the destruction of biblical proportions, the Armageddon of devastation left by the loggers and their massive machinery. The leathery rained soil was riddled naked to the sky, erupted roots exposed and discarded branches left to rot on the beleaguered battlefield. Rudy surveyed the wreckage and waste with a rueful smile.

Borneo logging concessions are valuable, government organised and highly controlled by the State, but the inevitable result was forest loss, not only for the indigenous people who depend on it, but for the 10,000 species of plants, nearly 1000 species of birds, and a medley of animals ranging from the tiny pygmy squirrel, the iconic orangutan and 12 other primates, and birds of elephant. Amongst the unique flora are some 3,500 types of trees, 2,500 orchids, pitcher plants and the feat-smelling Rafflesia, the world’s largest flower with a diameter of one metre, named for Sir Stamford Raffles. The huge trunks of the dipterocarps are reduced to plywood in the sawmills that Rudy showed me by the road, then loaded directly onto ocean-going cargo ships to feed the world’s need for building materials.

Rudy was trying to do his best. He hired Clive March, a greatly enthusiastic British biologist from Cambridge University, as the Sabah Foundation I∑Persian Sabahi eco-warrior and social conscience. Together they pioneered the early practice of carbon trading, the innovative idea of exchanging environmental impacts across the globe. For the first time, improved and less damaging forestry technologies in Borneo were offset against power company effects in North America. Under Rudy’s watch, 43,800 hectares had been set aside as the Danum Valley Conservation Area, an island of untouched and unlogged tropical rainforest, protected for its indispensable biodiversity and complete with a research facility manned by scientists from the UK’s Royal Society.

The Field Centre and its pristine setting was attracting so much attention from curious visitors that Rudy and Clive felt a separate tourist lodge would allow the scientific work to continue in peace. Clive was despatched to Nepal to visit the famous Tiger Tops and seek our assistance in planning the new lodge. A suitable riverside site had been selected, and designs commissioned featuring forest materials, river stones, jungle-style chalets, and an airy main building with spacious verandas set on columns of belimbing. Borneo’s famous wasp would be built.

Rudy insisted the buildings be set well back in case of flooding – he never forget the childhood trauma when his village was washed away in a flash flood. Otherwise, Clive and I were given a free hand for the market positioning, wildlife operations and nature-based activities. Malaysian staff were sent to train in Chitwan, Nepal, naturalists invited to run courses and perfect the programs. I prepared a marketing strategy, and Borneo Rainforest Lodge opened in 1994.

For the uninstructed, the misted undergrowth and dense vegetation make it hard to see much in tropical rainforests except the occasional dumpy beetle, butterfly flash, strange small or huge antipodes, but sound effects are a cacophony of bird calls and a melodic screams of insects that spew every note on the scale. Clive dressed black cotton ‘beach socks’ to protect guests on guided rainforest hikes. From the suspension bridge near Danum Valley Field Center, a flying squirrel glided every evening on his parachute-wings legs, accompanied by a symphony of six o’clock crickets.

Wildlife viewing from the network of nature trails and canopy walkways that Clive built at Borneo Rainforest Lodge was more rewarding, and especially when the jungle became habituated to the increasing flow of visitors. Borneo butterflies include the Sumatran thiocharas and Bulwer’s phaethon, and Danum is still one of the best places to spot the highly endangered orange-rumped ‘persion of the forest’, living in the lichens.

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Bhaktapur’s potters adapt to survive

Descendants of clay lamp makers carry on an ancestral profession for the festival of lights

Monika Deupala

Tihar is right around the corner, but the festival of lights is not going to be a holiday for the Prajapatis of Bhaktapur. They are busy with their ancestral occupation of moulding clay to make earthen lamps called pala. This week, the courtyards and sidewalks of Bhaktapur are covered in clay lamps, soaked in coloured water, and drying in the sun until they can be fired.

Dattu Ram Prajapati has been carrying on the profession of his forefathers, and says proudly that his family sold 25,000 clay lamps last year, earning Rs 480,000. But even through modern LED garden lights from China have replaced earthen lamps in many households, the clay oil lamps are still regarded as auspicious for Laxmi Puja, Maha Puja and Shai Tika, which fall between 7-10 November this year.

Many of the Prajapati clan have started mass producing the lamps with a wheel machine, but the purists still stick to traditional manual chakras to produce pots in the old fashioned way.

“I don’t feel good about using a machine to make pottery, my grandfather taught me to use the chakra when I was a boy and I still enjoy using it,” says 94-year-old Lallit Prajapati, the only person making pala in the traditional way in the Taalako area of Bhaktapur.

His skill of turning a clay mould into beautiful pottery attracts tourists by the hundreds to Taalako. “It is necessary to preserve our tradition, rather than going for mass production and money. We should not forget why we are making them in the first place,” he adds.

What Lallit Prajapati is particularly worried about is that the young have gone abroad for education or jobs, or have taken up other professions. There is no next generation to carry on the tradition.

Also, there is now a scarcity of the special black clay needed for making pottery because of the urban sprawl around Bhaktapur. Shivam Kumari Prajapati and her family traditionally sold pala in the market of all three towns of the valley before Tihar. Residents of the Valley sought the Bhaktapur pala because they knew it was the best quality.

Dattu Ram Prajapati says pottery production shifted to Bhaktapur because Patan and Kathmandu ran out of proper clay. But now the concrete jungle has spread to Bhaktapur as well, houses stand here forever clay pits.

“I am using my two-year-old stockpile of black clay that I bought for Rs 2,000 back then. It is much more expensive now,” he says.

Nishu Bhattarai, an artist from Hattigathahi, from outside the Valley, or from someone who is building a tall house that need foundations deep enough to reach the black clay layer.

Multi-award winning potter Shumsher Prajapati is the owner of Samset Ceramics, and the only one from his generation to still be involved in the ancestral profession. He has been innovating with design and texture of his clay products. “I see it more as an art than a profession,” says Shumsher, who sells double the number of earthen lamps in Tihar compared to the rest of the year.

His pala have better designs and finish, and now come with built-in wax and wick already attached. He has also started making scented lamps with wax of different colours. His son Sanmat takes the lamps to the Asian market in Kathmandu every morning in a van. “The father and son say their greatest problem now is to find suitable clay, not buyers.”
Sikuma Rai

After serving as a toy for the rich, for making an environmental statement, or as a hobby, electric cars have suddenly become a necessity. As the global climate warms up and the world wastes itself away from fossil fuels, there is suddenly a rash on battery-operated vehicles.

In Nepal, the government deliberately refused to provide incentives to battery-operated vehicles for many years because it would reduce revenue, but two years ago, slashed taxes on electric vehicles and increased the taxes for diesel and petrol cars. Since then, electric car sales in Kathmandu have soared.

At present there are over 500 electric cars, more than 1,500 battery two-wheelers and a few thousand electric three-wheelers on Nepal’s roads. But with Sulla and other bus companies poised to induct electric buses, and private owners showing a keen interest, the electric car market is poised for growth.

Agni, incorporated, which imports the popular Mahindra e2o, plans to convert its popular petrol KUV crossover to battery and bring it to Nepal early next year. With a 150 km range, the eKUV will cost Rs 5.5 million and be able to comfortably get to Pokhara with a fast charge along the way.

Agni has already sold 400 two- and four-door e20, and slashed prices on them from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 2.2 million by reducing the range for city driving, and the model is selling well in Kathmandu and other metros.

Continental Trading Enterprises introduced the electric version of its KIA Soul two years ago and sales have picked up after the tax on similar petrol vehicles was hiked. Despite its boxy look and price, the e-Soul is doing well, and KIA is preparing to introduce the e-Niro crossover with a range of 380km next year.

China’s BYD made high-profile launches of its ets by having President Bidya Devi Bhandari, the National Planning Commission, and the Nepal Electricity Authority ride around in them. But its main market is in buses, and earlier this month, the Prime Minister launched two of its e-buses for trial for Sulla Yatayat.

“We would like to use our best technology, and share our know-how to serve the Nepal’s market and the next generation, we see possibilities for e-mobility here,” Liu Xinhong of BYD Asia-Pacific Auto Sales Division told Nepali Times. BYD hopes to establish a training school for electric vehicle engineers, and provide electric buses for stranded conversations at airports like Kathmandu, Bhairahawa, Pokhara and elsewhere.

The main challenge for the spread of e-vehicles has been the lack of charging stations. KIA has installed a fast-charger in Kurti metered for Pokhara, and hopes to install 12 more around the country. Mahindra is also planning to build charging stations in Nausha, Mugling, Bhairahawa and Pokhara for inter-city drivers.

“Actually most e20s are used for city driving, so the lack of charging stations is just a psychological barrier. Still, we will need them when the longer range KUV starts rolling here,” says Agni’s Cabinet Shrestha, who is working on universal chargers that will work with any type of car. BYD also plans to establish 50 fast and slow charging stations on main highways, says Pradip Kumar Pandey of the BYD distributor in Nepal, Cimes Group, Subhadra Chhetri at
As the global climate warms up and the world weans itself away from fossil fuels, there is suddenly a rush on battery-operated vehicles. In Nepal too, electric cars, scooters and public buses are gradually becoming popular and establishing strong roots in the market.

Watch video about new electric car models coming to Nepal and how such vehicles can lift the economy.

**E-experiences**

**NIU Drive**
- Range: 80km
- Price: Rs249,000

**Terra Eco**
- Range: 80km
- Price: Rs138,000

**Bella**
- Range: 100km
- Price: Rs130,000

Continental agrees: "Until now, no one has ever complained about running out of charge. EV owners are smart and think ahead, but it is our responsibility to add charging stations."

The National Plan of Action for Electric Mobility that the Prime Minister unveiled this month has three priorities: setting up a new entity to promote EVs, a national program on infrastructure and market, and financial incentives. "The Plan hopes to turn 25% of public buses into electric ones by 2020."

The Nepal Electricity Authority is already putting up 28 charging stations around the country to encourage electric transportation. For Bhumi Tulsibhar of Seju Vashyata, this is a great leap: "The introduction of the Action Plan means the government has taken ownership of e-mobility promotion."

The other obstacle for e-mobility future is still taxes. Although customs duty on e-cars has been slashed to 10%, the tax on electric two-wheelers has increased, and electric three-wheelers have been banned in some Tarai cities.

The 60 paise per litre that consumers pay as Petroleum Tax has now grown into a kitty of a billion rupees, and could be invested in clean energy public transport. Last year, Nepal imported Rs15 billion worth of petroleum products, nearly double of the value the previous year. (See page 14-15)

The country's strategy should be to reduce this fuel import bill by switching to EVs.

Says Tulsibhar: "I do not see electric cars taking over Nepal's roads any time soon. Petrol and diesel vehicles will be around but we must make a start with electric public transport. It is good for public health because it will reduce pollution, and for the national economy."

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**E-scoots**

Aristide Tulsibhar, 60, has been using electric scooters to commute 15km one way from Swayambhunath to Kathmandu airport. Being an electrical engineer, he has struggled with many brands of battery-powered two-wheelers but always found the torque inadequate.

Finally, he has found one with enough oomph: the Japanese-made Terra Eco. "With this one, I don't have to stop half-way up the inclines on my daily commute."

Terra is one of several two-wheeler brands in Nepal that offers many advantages over petrol-powered ones. It started selling in Nepal in 2014, and has sold more than 5,000 units.

Now, Chinese scooters brands like Bells and NIU have also opened showrooms and are tapping the greater awareness about the environment among Nepal’s price-conscious youth.

Says Shyam Rajpurohit of Terra Motors Nepal: "We did a survey last year and found that out of 1,860 respondents, most were senior citizens who wanted comfort and ease, and youths who wanted affordability."

Aristide Tulsibhar, for instance, spends Rs250 on average on electricity and maintenance, compared to Rs400 a month if his scooter was petrol. The upfront cost of electric scooters also range from Rs40,000 to Rs60,000, which is similar to the prices of petrol scooters, the pricier ones could come down further if the government cut the 10% customs duty and 13% VAT, and since battery prices have gone down worldwide, the price of e-scooters will be even lower in future.

The scooters provide up to 80-100km on a full charge, and can pull a million riders even on the uphill White Gumba. They can be charged at some home like mobile phones. Terra and Bells both plan to introduce more powerful scooters in 2019, as customers want fast charge and extended driving range. NIU is setting up a scooter charging station in Lachhe Mall.

Electric scooter drivers in the past did not need a driving license nor did they have to register their vehicles, but the government has now made both mandatory. This dempered demand, but now it has picked up again.

Competition is also growing, and Terra now offers free lifetime maintenance, while NIU will exchange your petrol scooter and minus it from the price of a brand new one.

E-scooters are also spreading outside the Valley. Terra has dealers in Narayanghat, Butwal and Laban. NIU has reached Pokhara, Dakshik and Butwal, and Bella has 16 dealers across the country.

Sikuma Rai
**GETAWAY**

**Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge**

The resort is a oasis amidst the lush greenery of the Himalayas, offering a unique blend of serenity and adventure. The resort offers a variety of activities including trekking, rock climbing, and cultural tours. It is the perfect destination for nature lovers and adventure seekers.

**Gokarna Forest Resort**

This resort is located in the pristine forest of Gokarna, known for its lush greenery and natural beauty. The resort offers a range of facilities including cottage stays, spa treatments, and outdoor activities. It is the ideal place for a peaceful retreat and rejuvenation.

**Soaltee Westend Premier**

This luxury hotel is the perfect choice for those looking for a modern and stylish stay in Kathmandu. The hotel offers comfortable rooms, a fitness center, and a rooftop pool with stunning city views.

**Shangri-La Village Resort**

The resort is a luxurious retreat situated amidst the scenic hills of the Kathmandu Valley. It offers a range of facilities including a spa, indoor and outdoor pools, and a restaurant offering international cuisine.

**AIR QUALITY INDEX**

KATHMANDU, 26 October - 1 November

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<th>Date</th>
<th>AQI (Kathmandu)</th>
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**The AQI Index**

The AQI index is an air quality index that measures the level of pollutants in the air. It is a color-coded system that ranges from 0 to 500, with 0-50 considered to be “good”, 51-100 “moderate”, 101-200 “poor”, 201-300 “very poor”, and 301-500 “severe.”

**OUR PICK**

**Bhakti**

This event will take place at the home of a famous Nepali artist, where you will enjoy a traditional Nepali dinner and cultural performances.

**Jazz at the Temple House**

An evening of traditional Nepali music and dance, featuring local musicians and dancers.

**Jazzmundu Master Classes**

An opportunity for music students and jazz enthusiasts to learn from visiting musicians and share their experiences and stories.

**Jazzmundu Finale**

A dance and music festival featuring performances by local and international musicians.

**Jazz Bazaar**

A festival of jazz music featuring performances by local and international musicians.

**Jazzmundu Finale**

The festival of jazz music and dance features performances by local and international musicians.

**Kathmandu’s Skyline**

Enjoy panoramic views of the Kathmandu skyline from a rooftop bar.

**Kathmandu’s Skyline**

This rooftop bar offers stunning views of the Kathmandu Valley.

**Krishnapani**

The restaurant offers a wide range of dishes, including traditional Nepali cuisine.

**La Dolce Vita**

A cozy café located in the heart of the city, offering a range of drinks and snacks.

**Le Sherpa**

A luxury rooftop bar offering a wide range of drinks and snacks.

**Shangri-La Village Resort**

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Nepal’s fake poor

Politicians, traders and teachers have wangled IDs meant to help the poorest people

The Poor Household Identity Card Program was designed as a social safety net for the poorest in the most isolated parts of Nepal, but it has been hijacked by local movers and shakers. The program uses 18 indicators like household fuel, access to education and social status to determine those who live below the poverty line. The pilot phase has been implemented in 21 districts including Bajura and Bajhang here in Province 7.

Post surveys showed 64% of people in Bajura living below the poverty line, but that has grown to 71%. Similarly, Bajhang, which had 57% poor in 2009, now has 63% living below the poverty line. Why is this happening if the national poverty rate has gone down from 40% to 24%?

The answer: the real number of poor has not grown, it is just that the well-off have gotten their names on the list to claim benefits. Households earning less than Rs19,600 a year fall under Category A extreme poverty. Those with less than Rs31,600 fall into the Category B, and Category C covers those who earn less than Rs40,000 a year.

Even people who earned Rs25,000 a month and with property in the cities get themselves into the Category A list of the program in the Bajura. The list was issued 18 indicators said they have no idea who put them there. Most of the real poor are not listed, and even if they are, they fall in Category B or C.

Jenak Rai Giri is a well-known Bajura lawmaker from the NC, and even served as assistant minister for land reform in the Deuba government in 2002. His ID number is 260240. Giri says he has no idea how his name got there: “My mother was at home during the data collection. I was away. I do not know anything.”

Raj Bhika is a shearer/cropper in Giri’s farm, but is not in the list or poor. Bhika is a member of Halya community of former slaves.

Ayalk Bahadur Malla’s ID number is 289568. Far from being poor, he has served as UML District IOC member twice. Last year, he stood for the chair of Hinal Rural Municipality, but was defeated and now runs a welding workshop and a transport company in Martadi. He also claimed he had no idea how he came to be classified as poor.

Nabar Kansu is the father of Rupchandra Biswakarma, a physician who heads the Bajura District Health Office. His name is listed in Category B (ID Number 216001). When asked, Biswakarma said, “I do not know how my father’s name got there. If true, I will have it removed.”

It is the same story with accountant Khambari Bista, health coordinator Bhiku Kalla, Biju Bahadur Bha, the father of school principal Prakash Babadui Bha, and Rattu Bahadur Malla, the father of another teacher Prakash Kansu.

The list of well-off people on the poverty list is long. The government prepared it after a survey and issued ID cards for those categorized as poor. Through the full benefits have not been announced, up to Rs6,000 will be provided for medical expenses and a Rs52,000 insurance to poor households with five members. It will pay 100% insurance premium for Category A, 75% for Category B and 50% of the fee for Category C poor.

It has been ten years since the government banned bonded laborers, and although 1,500 Halyas have been identified in Bajura, they have not been resettled and have received no compensation. Many still plough the fields of their former masters, and are not in the list of poor.

Accountant Khambari Bista has got himself registered as a Category C poor, but Bikka Kansu, who works in his farm is not included.

The situation in neighbouring Bajhang is no different. When he heard that his neighbours Dhan Bahadur Sunar and Pravati Sunar were among the Category C poor, Gagan Badi was surprised because they are in the employ of a company.

“How can this happen? They are landowners, since when were they poor? Maybe they paid off people to be declared poor,” said Gagan Badi, visibly innate.

The Badi community in Bajhang are often victims of loan sharks who charge exorbitant interest, doctor documents and forge signatures. Yet, they are now “poor”, while the farmers they exploit are not on the list. In fact, landless Badi families who beg on the streets are not in the list.

The abuse of the poverty list is widespread in both districts. Rama Bahadur Kansu heads the Bajhang District Post Office, owns a four-storey house in Chaurpur, has his own vehicle and property. But he is listed as Category C poor.

“People understand what basis they collected the data,” says Municipality chair Akalal Bhati, “the rich people are listed as poor while the poor are not listed.”

Principal Waikl Bahadur Singh of Ranison School is the richest man in the village. He owns houses in Mahendranagar and Dhangadi and property in Kailamandu, Kuchpurpur and Bajhang. He is Category A.

It became so embarrassing that Bajural Municipality has stopped the distribution of IDs for the poor. “All the rich people from here have been enlisted as Category A, it is a travesty,” says Mayor Dhan Bahadur Bista.

Other local bodies in Bajhang have also held back ID distribution. Bhatta Bokaya, chair of Kailamandu, Chhanna Municipality said IDs will be handed out only after a thorough verification of the beneficiaries.

Says Govind Malla of Hinali: “I am the mayor of Hinali, it’s embarrassing to see people on the list.”

Additional reporting by Basant Prasad Shrestha in Bajhang for Centre for Investigative Journalism-Nepal.

Nimendra Shahi in BAJUR
WELCOME TO QATAR: President Bidya Devi Bhandari is received by the Qatar Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs H E Younis bin Jassim bin Jassim Al Naimi at Doha Airport on Monday as she arrived on a four-day visit.

SELAMAT DATANG: Labour Minister Gusmana Bista and Malaysian Minister for Human Resources M Kuizeswar sign a government to government labour pact in Kathmandu on Monday that will paved Nepal contract workers.

MEET AND GREETS: Newly appointed ambassador of the United States Randy Berry meets Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali in Singh Darbar on Sunday.

WE ARE ALL SHAHIDUL: Nepal photographers trained by deceased Bangladeshi photographer Shahidul Alam don masks with his face as they receive the Photo Kathmandu Award on his behalf. Alam has been jailed by the Bangladesh government.

Economists warn that the worst is yet to come.

The wounded develop gangrene when min terrors tunnel into food pools. Their bodies are infested with lice. There is the anxiety of killing and dying as smiling faces fade into images of fresh corpses and decomposing bodies. That is 15 days in a film not for the faint-hearted.

The storytelling is immersive, we are taken back to a century right into the frontlines. Jackson combines hundreds of voices which gives a constant commentary. A soldier talks of how impossible it is to have even a moment of respite from the constant gunfire and explosions. Viewers don't get much respite either.

Jackson even manages to find some humor and humanity amidst the carnage, we see not only the terror but also brotherhood as soldiers bond over tea, cigarettes, and gambling. The open toilets where men did not cover up because “there were no women.” We get glimpses of wagon and war horses, the poetry of mechanised tanks.

Soldiers start to sympathise with the German boys just like them on the other side, who are also missing their families. United by common misery, towards the end they “got on very well together.” The soldiers on both sides were caring for each other as long as they got to go home alive. When a soldier says that the Armistice was “the flattest moment in my life”, we realise that real warfare is very different from whiprapped up patriotism. It is just about man who want to finish the job.

But the war is not over even after it is over. The men are unemployed and unwanted back home. No one wants to talk about the Great War, no one understands what they went through. Like veterans before and after, they find they do not fit in anymore. ‘Never again’, many said after World War I, and it is to remember not to forget the brutal reality of war, and not make glorified assumptions about it. That documentaries like these are important. Jackson’s work is dedicated to his grandfather who served in the war.

Some 200,000 Gurkhas fought in World War I in Gallipoli, Mesopotamia and the Western Front. One in ten did not return home to Nepal, and 2,000 were decorated for bravery in battle. But there is no trace of Gurkhas in this film, although we catch a brief glimpse of some marching. Sikkis. The sacrifice of the Gurkhas and of the colonial armies is once more air-brushed, just as it is in the Imperial War Museum in London. This is about what white men went through while fighting other white men, not about the brown boys from Nepal who helped them. It has taken 100 years to produce a film that at least begins to look at the folly of the war, and to wipe away the distinction between victors and the vanquished. How much longer will it take for film makers to shed their Euro-centric and document the sacrifices of tens of thousands of brown soldiers who fought for Nepal and India who laid down their lives for a king and country not their own?

Popular culture has a great impact in shaping collective memory. Jackson’s documentary could have been a milestone to set history right, but it is an opportunity missed and the exclusion rankles.

Sewa Bhattacharjee

They Shall Not Grow Old
Screening: British Council, Landhurt 3:30 PM Sunday, 11 November
AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

• No. 1 on Bloomberg’s 2009 Business Week Top Performing Tech 10 (Above Apple, Google, Yahoo, Amazon, Microsoft etc...)

• Top 15 in Fortune Magazine’s Top 51 Change the World Company (Above IBM, Inten, etc...)

• Global Market Leader in Electric Vehicle for 2015, 2016, 2017

• The only Chinese Automaker backed by Warren Buffet

• UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon Awards BYD Zero Emission

• BYD Footprints: 6 Continents, 48 Countries & Regions, 200 Cities

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C6
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200KM Range
Decarbonise now

Anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions pose an existential threat to the planet—and to Nepal

The conclusion of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C could not have been more timely: human-induced global warming poses an existential threat to the planet, and to Nepal.

To avert this, the report has called for pathways that look unachievable. The CO₂ goal has already been ruled out by 2050. There is a genuine view that another generation has already been and we, people, are using to cope with them, and have carried on with their lives. Some feel human ingenuity will prevail, and there will be a technological solution. Such fuels of development and leapfrogging countries that suffer the worst consequences of global warming argue that their priority is economic development, and they may invest in clean energy when they can afford it.

The new Global CO₂ emission pathways in the IPCC Special Report requires measures to come to some sharp downturn in 2020 and reach zero emission by 2050. (See graph. How will this happen? To answer this, we have to first ask how we got here in the first place.

Climate change is a consequence of the global economic order of the past two centuries that was powered by burning fossil fuels. It has brought benefits, but also given the world inequality, dependence, degradation of nature, and nationalistic populism. In the US that is a parochial divide between climate change believers and deniers. Liberal democracy is faltering in Europe.

In the past six decades, many developing countries including Nepal sought funding for its living standards, but the strategy did not bring about structural changes that would have helped ensure social welfare and environmental protection. The economic model was western-inspired wasteful consumption. In Nepal, this led to social and political movements, and country suffered three border blockades, a decade-long war, five constitutions, a police massacre, and the replacement of a monarchy with a federal republican order. Nepal's current socio-political shows signs of regression, while the economy is built on ecologically-destructive extractive practices.

Most solutions are externally imposed, and have only worked when co-opted with communities. Past investments have been precommercial and have not yielded the desired systemic impact. Similar narratives prevail in almost all countries, the national quo is too conformist, and the ruling classes benefit from business as usual. Add to that is the populism of farmers. Given the prevailing dogma in both the rich and poor countries, it is unclear that carbon will become less steep as hoped for in the IPCC Report. Nepal’s Prime Minister KP Oli, while launching the first electric buses in Kathmandu last week, announced a National Action Plan for Electric Mobility under which 20% of public transport will be battery operated by 2020.

This proportion, theoretically, can offset some emission and fuel cost, but without clear thought through investment strategy, purchasing, transport will not fail. Since 2000, import of petroleum products has increased by more than three times. Increasing the economy towards renewable needs substantial investment and vision—both of which are lacking. Imported electric vehicles will not build backward linkages in the economy, and the trade deficit will continue to grow. Without a fundamental revision of its economy towards a more self-reliant clean energy supply, and a stronger commits to protect ecosystems, Nepal will not meet desalination targets.

Globally, buying carbon emissions to zero in the next 30 years will need incentives on investments globally and within individual countries which promote social equity and trust in nature, improve governance and prioritise a low carbon world.

Ajay Dixit

Executive Director of Kathmandu based SEED Nepal. His monthly column ‘Climate Change in Nepal’ (Times) deals with the impact of global warming in Nepal.

From a fossil past to an ecological one

Nepal’s addiction to petroleum is more an economic problem than an ecological one

President Bidya Devi Bhandari will be heading the Nepali delegation at the Climate Summit Kunming in Poland next month, and environmental activists are lobbying with the Nepali government to get her to make a far-reaching policy statement on renewable energy.

They say Nepal’s commitment of turning 20% public vehicles into battery-operated ones by 2020 is not ambitious enough, and the President can announce in Katowice more meaningful steps towards electric mobility.

In a symbolic move to end Nepal’s fossil fuel addiction, President Bhandari is already riding an electric car (see page 4) but activists say that is not enough. She needs to create political momentum by getting her government to announce a cut-off date for Nepal to turn all public vehicles into electric ones.

Manoj Dhakal, advisor to the Least Developed Countries (LDC) support group at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), says: “Nepal can move towards electric mobility by the end of this year. The state should announce a goal to this effect at the international climate change conference in Poland.”

Last week, Prime Minister KP Oli flagged off Nepal’s first five electric buses in Kathmandu, and unveiled the country’s first National Plan for Electric Mobility.

Shubhangi Talukdar of SaSa Yatayat, the public transportation company that got the first lot of electric buses on loan from the Lumbini Climate Action Trust for Kathmandu routes, says: “Public transport is directly related to public health, and it is also linked to Nepal’s economic well-being. This can be the beginning of a new era in clean transportation.”

The The National Plan of Action envisages a separate unit at the Ministry of Environment for the promotion of electric transport, but many are skeptical about it. The government was worth only in implementing commitments.

A recent report by Nepal Climate Action Network South Asia (N-CANSA) says Nepal is actually moving in the opposite direction, non-renewable direction despite many past policies, strategies and international obligations to lower its dependency on fossil fuels—the biggest source of CO₂ emissions.


But since then, the country’s addiction to fossil fuel has only deepened. All the policies and strategies did not make a dent on imports. In 1990-94, the year Nepal ratified the UNFCCC, Nepal’s total import of petroleum products was merely Rs 2.6 billion. By 2008, it had grown to nearly Rs 6.8 billion, and in
the past ten years it has more than tripled to an annual Rs150 billion. (See graph)

The reason is the explosive growth in the number of fossil fuel vehicles from only 84,893 ten years ago to 438,060 today.

Most of the increase was during the tenure of Maoist finance minister Baburam Bhattarai in 2008-9. Part of the reason for the growth in petroleum imports was also the corruption-driven artificial shortage of electricity which saw a proliferation of diesel generators. Import of diesel grew five times in the past ten years.

For every Rs160 earned from its exports, Nepal spends Rs160 just to import petroleum from India. Nepal is now also importing half of its electricity need from coal-fired thermal plants in India. Although it went down slightly with monsoon supply and new hydro powerplants coming on stream, Nepal imported 424MW of electricity from India this summer, which was about 35% of peak demand.

Says Durgha Upadhyay, a co-author of the CANSAS report: “If it was not for remittances, our foreign currency earnings from exports would not even pay for petroleum imports.”

Despite policies and symbolic moves to reduce petroleum imports, Nepal’s consumption is growing as the road network spreads and vehicle imports increase. The government’s plans to build a 72km cross-border petroleum pipeline from India and storage stocks in each Province indicate that there is no end in sight to the country’s fossil fuel addiction.

Manojit Bhasak says these moves indicate that Nepal’s policymakers believe the cost of ending the dependence on petroleum is too high. “But that is an outdated concept,” he says.

“It is now possible to drive a country’s economy without using fossil fuels. PM Oli should learn from Costa Rica, a country he visited recently.”

Some argue that Nepal’s economy is so petroleum dependent that it cannot switch suddenly to renewable sources for the conversion of cars, and to add new hydropower plants. Nepal’s per capita carbon footprint is negligible, they add, so whether or not Nepal goes for electric mobility is not going to save the planet. However, former energy minister Dipak Gyawali says: “The volume of carbon emitted by Nepal might be small, but the rate at which we are increasing it is even higher than the industrialised West.”

Gyawali says Nepal should immediately declare a peak emission year, pass a policy to gradually replace all government vehicles with electric ones and impose a tax on fuel that can be used to substitute electric vehicles.

Nepal needs to do this more importantly to reduce its balance of payment deficit, save the country from bankruptcy, and reduce its political dependence on India, than to save the world from global warming.

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