In wait-and-wait mode

Before Prime Minister KP Oli flew to Singapore on 18 August for the second time in a month, he made sure he left with a provocative statement to Parliament that he intended to sever out his entire term. He was trying to divert attention away from his own kidney ailment, and bastish all thoughts of impotence that anyone might have had.

In an outburst at a party meeting, the Prime Minister even chastised Madhav Kumar Nepal for accepting his imminent demise. Once in Singapore, he held a much-publicised Skype conference call with the Cabinet in Kathmandu. Not much transpired, but the medium was the message — don’t count me out just yet.

No surprise, then, that Nepal’s current politics is now in suspended animation, and its future course will be determined by the Prime Minister’s health prognosis. The PM’s transplanted kidney is producing too many antitoxins, which has led to complications. He is getting photopheresis treatment to replace blood plasma. The procedure cannot be repeated too often and if he responds well, Oli should return in the next two weeks. But if he does not, he will need retransplantation of the kidney, for which he will need a donor, say doctors who were believed by the PM’s doctors.

When Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal agreed to go half-half on prime ministership and to share the party chairmanship, Dahal may have calculated that Oli’s health would deteriorate and he would get a chance at the helm sooner rather than later.

This time, Dahal was designated stand-in, and he immediately convened an NCP party meeting on Monday (page 18) to sort out the unfinished business of allocating positions within the united party.

In the triangular power struggle between Oli, Dahal and former Madhav Nepal, it is Nepal’s turn now to be isolated. In fact, Prime Minister Oli seems to see more of a threat from his erstwhile UML colleague than from the former Maoist Dahal.

Oli did manage to woo away Bhanu Gautam, and could still use him to thwart Dahal in future. Anything is possible between these three comrades, each a thief of each other. Dahal himself can do nothing but be in wait-and-wait mode. Oli has another year to go till he’s 70-year-old, and Dahal could be betting he does not have to wait that long.

Kiran Nepal
EVEREST POSTMORTEM

Ever since the Great Trigonometric Survey of India declared that the world’s tallest mountain was Peak XV located on the border between Nepal and Tibet, Everest has brought out the best and the worst in us. Nepalis have conveniently forgotten that the summit is on the border and only the southwest face of Everest is in Nepal — the east and west faces are wholly in China. While the Tibetans had a hard time reaching the mountain (Chomolungma), the Nepali bureaucracy had to break its own record on the climb only after it was determined to be the highest in the world.

When Tenzing Noray and Edmund Hillary returned from Everest in 1953, Nepalis claimed Tenzing as our own, publishing him in our newspapers (ignoring Hillary) & Thapa composed a folk song that implied Tenzing had to bag the summit to the world.

The 1996 disaster, when 15 climbers died on the mountain (eighth on them on a single day, 11 May), made ‘overcrowding’ synonymous with ‘Everest’. The battle for the status of the world’s highest peak only after it was determined to be the highest in the world.

The committee carried out a post-mortem of Everest 2019 and found that the main cause of the deaths was the narrow window, inexperience and lack of fitness, altitude and medical conditions. One could argue that the committee was more concerned to altitude sickness and exhaustion, so creating a contributory factor. Summerys lack of experience at altitude and limited climbing skills were also causes for delays on the summit ridge on 25 Mai as well. Even though ‘traffic jams’ may not have been the main cause of fatalities this year, publicity about this did prompt the government to act.

The committee’s recommendations, if enacted into law and enforced, could change Himalayan climbing. For example, only those who have been on a peak higher than 6,500m in Nepal will be allowed to climb a mountain above 8,000m, and mountaineers must have climbed at least one peak below 6,500m before they can climb a peak higher than that. This will not only ensure diversification away from Everest and benefit other peaks of Nepal, but also guarantees that only experienced climbers get to scale mountains like Everest, Kangchenjunga, Makalu or Manaslu.

However, the committee appears to have taken at least one step backward: it is not the technical climbing grade of mountains. There is a vast difference between climbing the relatively easy Cho Oyu (8,210m) and the technically difficult K2 (8,611m).

The committee has also proposed that Everest climbers must show proof they have paid a Nepali agency at least $5,000. While this may lessen crowds, it will not be much of a deterrent against rich but inexperienced trophy hunters.

UP AND DOWN

Nepal is a hot tourist country, and what better way to ‘treat’ tourists than with world-class media? After all, the nation’s mountain ranges are the heart of the Himalayas. So, it is not too late to be minor.

The committee found that cheap expeditions did not stock up on enough oxygen, and that guides with little experience were a danger to climbers. The solution to this could be a payment from private and minimum experience for support crews. The new rules for licensing officers are also being changed, requiring them to stay at Base Camp till the end of expeditions, to thwart fake climbers and to do a trash survey.

As with everything else in Nepal, the funding of the building will be in the public. Given endemic corruption and the likelihood of forged documents, it remains to be seen if these rules will be followed. If implemented honestly, these reforms should clean up the mountain’s twisted image.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Times.com

NEPAL

A RURAL LIFESTYLE

Most rural habitats in Nepal are underdeveloped and senseless, but Baglung, a district in the heart of the country, is making a name for itself in the tourism sector. Here, the locals are adapting to the rapidly changing world, embracing modern technologies and lifestyle changes.

WHAT’S TRENDING

NEPAL BY NIGHT

You are in a land of night where the stars shine bright and the moon illuminates the paths. Welcome to the heart of Nepal, where the nightlife is as vibrant as the natural beauty. Whether you are a solo traveler or a group of friends, there is something for everyone in this bustling city. From traditional music to modern dance, Nepal has it all to offer.

FATHER’S DAY

A day dedicated to the loving and dedicated fathers who have always been the backbone of their families. Celebrate this special day by spending some quality time with your dad, expressing gratitude, and making him feel loved.

SAFETY TIPS

In today’s fast-paced world, safety should always be a priority. Here are some simple yet effective safety tips to keep in mind:

1. Always be aware of your surroundings.
2. Keep your belongings safe.
3. Avoid walking alone at night.
4. Use public transportation or taxis instead of walking.
5. Stay connected — always let someone know where you are going.

NEPAL PILGRIM TOURS

It’s a journey through a land of ancient temples, historical sites, and cultural heritage. Nepal Pilgrimage Tours offers a unique opportunity to explore the spiritual and historical significance of the country’s sacred sites.

NEPAL TRAVEL TIPS

1. Plan your itinerary well in advance.
2. Carry a map of the area you are visiting.
3. Dress appropriately for the weather.
4. Always respect the local culture and customs.
5. Be respectful of the environment and wildlife.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Life is what happens when you’re busy making other plans."

— John Lennon

NEPALS TWEETS

"Enjoy your time in Nepal! Whether it’s trekking in the mountains or visiting ancient temples, there’s something for everyone. #NepalTravels #DiscoverNepal http://bit.ly/2XN3YQZ"


"Nepal’s rich cultural heritage and friendly people make it a perfect destination for travelers. #NepalTravel #CulturalTourism http://bit.ly/2Y45P2Z"

"Visit Nepal’s scenic lakes, breathtaking views of the Himalayas, and explore its diverse landscapes. #NepalVacation #AdventureTravel http://bit.ly/2Y45P2Z"

"Nepal’s vibrant festivals are a treat for the eyes and soul. Witness the color and energy of the Tihar Festival. #NepalFestivals #TiharFestival http://bit.ly/2Y45P2Z"

"Explore the history and architecture of Nepal’s ancient cities. Witness the grandeur of Patan Durbar Square. #NepalHistory #HeritageTourism http://bit.ly/2Y45P2Z"

"Nepal’s cuisine is a fusion of flavors. Try the delicious momos, dal bhat, and khichdi. #NepalCuisine #FoodieTourism http://bit.ly/2Y45P2Z"

"Nepal’s vibrant culture and traditions are celebrated through music and dance. Witness the Bhasma Karki festival. #NepalFestivals #BhasmaKarki http://bit.ly/2Y45P2Z"

"Nepal’s forests and wildlife sanctuaries are a paradise for nature lovers. Spotting grizzled gibbons and blue magpies is a dream come true. #NepalWildlife #NatureLovers http://bit.ly/2Y45P2Z"

"Nepal’s rich cultural heritage and friendly people make it a perfect destination for travelers. #NepalTravel #CulturalTourism http://bit.ly/2Y45P2Z"

"Visit Nepal’s scenic lakes, breathtaking views of the Himalayas, and explore its diverse landscapes. #NepalVacation #AdventureTravel http://bit.ly/2Y45P2Z"

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WELCOME ON BOARD:  
CANCUN 

The airline that flies to more countries than any other now flies to one more destination.
Homestay brings locals home

Tourism has helped restore Kalabang village, the ‘virgin land’ of Pokhara

Reeti KC

B each of street roll down the foothills of the surrounding mountains, a peaceful and serene atmosphere can be felt in Pokhara. The village is nestled in the green hills, surrounded by the clear blue sky and the winding river below.

As the visitors arrive, they are welcomed with open arms by the locals. The people in the village are friendly and hospitable, eager to share their culture and traditions with the visitors. The streets are lined with shops selling local handicrafts and souvenirs, and the aroma of fresh flowers fills the air.

One of the main attractions in the village is the Kalabang Homestay, which offers a unique experience for visitors who want to immerse themselves in the local culture. The homestay is run by a local family, and visitors are welcomed into their home, where they can experience traditional meals and learn about the local way of life.

The homestay is situated in the heart of the village, offering a perfect location for visitors to explore the surrounding areas. The nearby river and mountains provide ample opportunities for hiking, trekking, and other outdoor activities.

Overall, the village of Kalabang is a peaceful and serene place to visit, offering a unique and authentic experience for those who want to explore the beauty of the surrounding mountains and learn about the local culture.
The federal government’s response to the climate emergency often seems too little too late, and the scope of the global crisis is such that one country by itself cannot tackle it. But the federal government should be investing to adapt and mitigate the climate crisis and its impacts, says a new report called the Nepal Citizen’s Climate Budget. A survey in the report, which was created by Freedom Forum with technical support from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and International Budget Partnership, a US-based NGO, and funded from the UK Government concludes:

- 100% of respondents in the central mountains saw an increase in cold waves while 100% of central hills experienced a decrease
- 99.3% of participants reported drought
- 97.7% witnessed an increase in diseases and insects and sporadic rain
- 84.6 found the monsoon delayed by 3-4 weeks
- 84.5% experienced a decrease in surface water.

The report summarises the state of the climate crisis. Nepal ranks in the top 20 countries that have suffered the most from the impacts of climate change, through floods, forest fires, drought and other climate-induced disasters.

Further, 29 districts are vulnerable to landslides, 22 are at risk of drought, 12 could be hit by a glacial lake outburst flood and 9 are in danger of flash floods.

Between 1983 and 2009, the economic cost of climate change averaged Rs 2 billion a year, while in 2017 the price tag for flood damage alone was Rs 60.7 billion, adds the report. There is no data for economic losses caused by drought and forest fires, it notes. How have Nepal’s governments responded to the climate emergency? More than a quarter of last year’s federal government budget was “relevant to climate change”. Examples cited include:

- Development and expansion of hydro-electricity and renewables
- Production, import and use of electric public transport
- Solar test through mobile lab Melamchi Project.

By contrast, in 2013-14 just 10% of the budget was climate related. But the picture changes on closer inspection. Just 20% of the 2018-19 climate change budget was allocated to “highly relevant” activities – programs where at least 60% of the budget is related to climate change.

While climate-focused spending has been growing as a proportion of the overall federal budget, the chunk of it considered “highly relevant” has been shrinking. It was 68% in 2013-14, 31% in 2016-17 and 20% in 2018-19. In addition, the proportion of the budget that is actually spent has been falling, from 90% in 2013-14 to 63% in 2015-16 and 57% in 17-18.

Noting that the central government did not publish climate-specific climate budget report for the last fiscal year, the report urges citizens, civil society and people’s representatives to monitor government spending on climate. 

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This scheme is valid for limited period only.
The religion of rugby

The 20-nation 2019 Rugby World Cup will kick off in Japan next month, but many in Nepal will not know it.

I was bemused in all sides by a resonating wall of damp duck jackets, the wide bodies of my enthusiastic neighbours. The crowd was on its feet roaring and cheering any point as any South Asian football throng.

SO FAR SO GOOD

Liza Choegyal

Fuelled with drink and devotion, unadulterated passionate approval greeted the latest score. Sheets of winter rain fell steadily on the green grass field, droplets gathering in the glow of the arc lights above us, but nothing could dampen the mass ecstatic.

I was in the midst of the unlikely temple precinct of Eden Park, Auckland’s iconic stadium and the shrine dedicated to New Zealand Rugby Union. The worship of New Zealand’s All Black team is well known to inspire national religious fervour, the adoration accorded to the elite players up there with divine beings and Himalayan gods.

Team selection is headline news, coaching and the layout chants as deaths of past players are marked with respectful silence, and any match last, god forbid, is enshrined as a national disaster.

The collective senescence, power of the pack and crush of bodies galloping a selfless common cause had all the hallmark’s of a spiritual jaunt — the festiv sacrum of Krishna Janmastami, the orange boat of Festival, the glittering red sea of Til, the cross-legged Kaisho Krishna Buddha, and the multitude of pilgrims at India’s Kumbh Mela, the huge gathering held every 12 years in northern India.

Granted, the Kumbh Mela crowd is counted in tens of millions rather than more less of thousands in Auckland and, instead of black jersey and protective headgear, most devotees are naked except for a loin cloth, matted hair, sacred threads or virgint ears.

Although from a country of less than five million people, the All Blacks are respected throughout the world as the side to beat, the champions hardly ever knocked out until rugby number one slot. Masters of the oval ball, their intimidating Mervi bikes is performed before each match, calculated to inspire awe in the opposition with beefy knees bent, eye wide, tongue protruding.

The squad of massive, muscular, tattooed athletes are household names in New Zealand, nurtured, trained and timed as the global Kiwi sports symbol — the silver fern logo was recently proposed to replace the national flag.

Great win last night!” The country rejoices, quiet satisfaction unites the borders of black-clad supporters filing out after the game. Kiwi reserve and natural poiselessness keep the mood from overt gloating.

The yellow sweaters of the defeated Australians are treated with quiet disdain.

My excitement at these great international clashes is recently acquired, and my grasp of the finer rules of the game is slender. Both sons played at school, but I had been a neglectful ‘soccer Mum’ seldom on the sidelines. Surooj captained the school First XV and even made the under-18 Victoria side for a precious few minutes before a knee injury had him carried off the field.

With a twice broken nose and dislocated shoulder between them, the boys decided discretion was the better part of valour and returned to the terraces of college league games. Lined up against the big guys from the Pacific Islands. That’s a relief for a mother, as the injuries get worse as a stigma rises.

My early interest in international rugby centred on the post-match revelry in the busy bars of Edinburgh’s Rose Street that followed the Scottish internationals played at Murrayfield. Not that we actually ever got to watch the game, just a shortcut straight to the pub parties afterwards, either celebrating a win or drowning a defeat.

In the final year of my stinting Scottish school, dusty classrooms and echoing corridors behind the gilt grey façade of Holyrood Square, I left with disappointing marks and a general impotence with what I perceived as an oppressive establishment.

My disbelieved schoolfriend Kate and I would rock up after weekend work at her family cafe, a gourmey spot serving vegan delights and fresh chopped vegetables from their farm along the Moray Firth. It still exists as a favourite Edinburgh eatery, upgraded to Henderson’s Salto Table and now run by my ex-generation or two. Kate and I were no doubt wearing miniskirts, deeply inappropriate for the chilly climate, or weird flared trousers fashionable in the 1960s, and unsuitable boots, jethal on the wet cobble of Scotland’s gloomy capital city on a late Saturday night.

We were relieved to be out of the constraints of easy school uniforms, crumpled white shirts and hideous burgundy-stripped ties.

Kate’s counter-culture Mum was my first conscious contact with the Himalaya that became my home. She had returned from a Karen Cila spiritual quest to India with smooth diety — wonderfully exotic and evocative in contrast to the predictable cool and flu affections of the dreary British north. It was not long afterwards that I finished school, graduated from the rugby pubs, found a way to break the oppressive bonds, and set off on my restless journey. It was a long circumstantial quest that would eventually lead me to Nepal.

Next month the 2019 Rugby World Cup kicks off in Japan, a six-week bonanza in which 20 nations battle for the coveted championship. New Zealand’s All Blacks are defending their reigning title, and supporters worldwide are preparing for the ultimate clash of the giants. Held every four years, this is the first time the tournament is being played in Asia, outside the traditional heartlands of rugby union. You can guess who I am supporting.
Replaying male machismo

True West has contemporary resonance in the age of toxic masculinity

Sewa Bhattarai

L.

ese and Austin are brothers who don’t seem to have much in common. Austin is a cultured man with an Ivy League degree trying to make it as a screenplay writer. Lee is a wanderer who lives in the shadows. But when they come together in a difficult situation, it seems they are not different at all—each brims with toxic masculinity.

Nepal-based director Deborah Menela has chosen to stage this Pulitzer-winning 1980 play by American playwright Sam Shepard without much adaptation. You can Google the plot, spoilers, and all, but we won’t go into it. You’d have to see the play to believe it. Suddenly, Lee is forced to live with Austin, his brother. Lee suddenly stands to lose his dreams, despite his superior education and money. Lee, though, doesn’t give up on anything, knowing he can’t make it without his brother’s refined education. And so the brothers blame each other for their plight and battle it out, with an alcoholic father and a passive mother added to the mix. Brothers envying each other is familiar to most of us, while Lee believes that Austin— with his fancy degree and a foot-in-Hollywood—is living the glamorous life. Austin thinks that he is a hardworking and adventurous every day. This intense drama simmers with an undercurrent of violence that threatens to explode. And sitting in the present, we cannot help but remind ourselves of masculinity today—that however much things change, they remain the same. Lee’s desire to dominate everyone around him is an obvious example, but so is Austin, whose manners are mere veneer for what lies underneath.

“This drama is relevant today in the era of Donald Trump, when toxic male machismo is on the rise,” Menela tells us after a rehearsal this week at Kausi Theatre. Perhaps because of its contemporary resonance, the drama is enjoying a revival today with a recent Broadway production starring Ethan Hawke and another starring Ethan Hawke and Thomas Harington. Set in the US 30 years ago, it is considered a quintessentially American play, but the cast here feels that it has universal resonance today.

“We in Nepal think the grass is greener on the other side, and many of us go abroad with great expectations. But often what awaits is disillusionment,” says Divya Dev, who plays the younger Austin. Dreams can come crashing down any time and when that happens, Austin has nothing to hold on to, and he starts to lose faith. Alejandro Mendez, who is playing the older Lee, feels every well-written drama has a wide resonance. “The lone alcoholic who slowly drifts out of respectable social circles and lives a criminal life on the edges of a universal character,” he says. “I play the role that there is an increase in such characters today. Eorom Dev is a powerful stage presence as the easily manipulated brother who doesn’t speak up against bullies, and Kun addition to the mix.”

The drama is a stark portrayal of the unrealistic standards of success that modern society demands, and of the loss of simplicity and innocence. We see these themes manifesting now in Nepal, as well. Says Kunachi Dasgupta, who plays the mother: “Even though it is set in a particular time and place, it has a distinctly American feel; you can draw allegories to the current time. “

Tara Wai
Kausi Theatre, Kathmandu
8-13 Sep
Overkill on Everest

It is politically correct (but factually wrong) to blame fatalities on Everest solely on overcrowding

Damien Francois

Earlier this month, a government panel that was set up after this spring's fatalities on Everest was told that they were blamed on overcrowding. Recommendations that permits be issued to climb left Everest only to those who have already scaled a Nepali mountain taller than 8,500m. It also suggested that each foreign mountaineer spend at least $30,000 during the Everest expedition and $20,000 for other mountains. Everest support teams should also have at least three years' experience in the high altitude climbs.

Although welcome, the immediate question is whether these rules are enforceable. Certificates can be forged and bought, and the $4,600 threshold is not enough. — Everest climbers need technical skills and high altitude experience, at least to 7,500m. A summit of Ac Daban (6,856m) would qualify climbers for the big mountains but Men Peak (6,747m) would not. Baruntse (7,129m), although less technical, than Ac Daban, would qualify on the height criteria.

Charging $30,000 (per permit only) would probably be unrealistic. It would certainly reduce the crowds since that amount equals a full expedition budget currently, but it would not deter the affluent and 'bucklist' climbers from tackling Everest.

This spring, I almost turned around at the Summit Camp on 23 May, even though the infamous 'tragic jam' was not as bad as when Nirmal Purja took the new famous photo the day before. I did summit at a relatively late 10am — it had taken my Everest team 13 hours to climb from Camp 4 on the South Col (at the summit).

We had trained hard, were fit and experienced and had sufficient supplies of oxygen. We descended in a storm, but all made it safely back to Camp 4, and then descended to Base Camp on the 25th. We had done our homework and were prepared.

Four of the 9 climbers who died on the south side of Everest this year were Indians. Two more died on Makalu and Kangchenjunga each. 13 of the 21 climbers who died in the big Himalayan mountains in the spring of 2019, 8 were from India. Since India made up the highest number of climbers on Everest this spring, it could be that they had a higher fatality rate. Most Indian expeditions were on lower budgets and had less oxygen higher up the mountain. Although the number of permits issued has risen since the first congestion drama on Everest in 1999, things are still pretty much the same. As John Krakauer wrote in his famous piece in Outside magazine in September 1996: 'Everest deals with trespassers harshly: the dead vanish beneath the snows.' I agree, but the dead do not vanish. They are pretty visible.

Too much rubbish has been written in the past months about trash (see box, overview and overcrowding on Everest. The number of permits this year was nearly the same as in 2018. A lot of clients on Everest should not have been there at all — they did not have enough experience, and were not fit enough.

I passed the body of Don Cash, an American climber who died of a heart attack close to the Hillary Step. A Sherpa who had passed me on our descent while climbing down the Lhotse Face fell to his death because he suffered an epileptic seizure just when we changed our safety clip at an anchor point. Neither died because of overcrowding.

Ever since the ‘Into Thin Air’ 1996 drama, it has become a tradition to speak of the ‘traffic jam’, ‘crash’ or even ‘carnage’ on Everest. Granted, I passed six dead climbers myself this year, but was there carnage? Crash? Is ‘traffic jam’ the right metaphor at all? It is politically correct (but factually wrong) to blame for numbers. Is Everest really more dangerous? An ExploredWeb calculation shows that the summit-to-fatality ratio on Everest has been steadily declining from 12.1% in 1996 to 1.4% this year.

Let us compare the 22 May (Nirmal Purja) photo with my 23 May picture and the Scott Fisher photo of 10 May 1996 (in John Krakauer’s book, Into Thin Air). As seen from the South Summit, there are definitely many more climbers on the traverses to, and, the Hillary Step in 2019 than in 1996.

On 22 May there was more ‘traffic’ than on the next day. There was definitely a problem. But it was the higher number of climbers really the reason for the deaths of nine climbers on the Nepali side that day?

Adventures in Robert Macfarlane’s

Kunda Dixit

Camping on the glacier, the snow fell softly all night, making the tent sag. But the stars were out when we set off down along the steep snowfield, climbing with the sun. At the Col, we turned left and stopped on the 3,870m summit of Mont Blanc de Chamonix before noon.

Under the dazzling blue summer sky the snowy peaks of the Pennine Alps rise like pointed cloudids, with the range of Matterhorn in the distance and the Lac Erance reservoir a long way down. The euphoria of summitting must have made me careless as we descended: that night’s new snow had covered the slippery ice underneath. The crampons did not hold, and in less than a second I was hurtling past the indomitable toothless, Fritz and Urs. Bothinstantaneously dug their axes into the ice, and their combined strength on the rope arrested my fall with a jerk.

‘We made it, of course — I wouldn’t be writing this otherwise...’ Robert Macfarlane writes about his own close shave on nearby Lagginhorn (4,160m) in the first chapter of his book Mountains of the Mind. What possesses human beings to climb mountains despite, he probably also because of, the fear and danger?

The book came out in 2004, but this passage is worth re-reading in the context of what transpired on Mt Everest this spring: ‘Nothing makes mountain-going peculiar among leisure activities is that it demands of some of its participants that they die... Life, it frequently seems in the mountains, is more intensely lived the closer one gets to its extremities: we never feel so alive as when we have nearly died.’

As a boy, Macfarlane was inspired to write about his impromptu summer in his grandparents’ library, visiting re-reading Maurice Leblanc’s Arsène 0hanz. What possessed Malley, Herzog and others to put their lives on the line? Macfarlane inserts his own adventures and near-death experiences in the Alps, Pamir and Himalaya to dissect the philosophy of mountainism. We learn about the early Western fascination with mountains and their ‘conquest’, starting with Thomas Bennet, Charles Lyell and others. Charles Darwin, we learn, used his ability to peer into deep time to ponder not just the origin of species, but also the impermanence of mountains. Alfred Wegener showed proves here a past and future and we are constantly reshaped by continental drift.

‘To understand even a little about geology gives you special specialities through which to see a landscape, writes Macfarlane in his elegant prose. ‘They allow you to see back in time to worlds where rocks liquify and seas petrify...’

So it is while trekking in Nepal. What seems to be stunning scenery frozen in time is actually just one frame in a timelapse video that began millions of years ago, and will continue for millions more as mountains rise and fall.

The book devotes a whole chapter to mountains maps, and how they ‘do not take account of time, only of space.’ A flat map of mountains does not show the vertical scale. All maps of mountains should be in 3-D, and
summit around 19 May, while others went for 29 May. But the weather changed, leading to a higher number of climbers aiming to summit on 22-23 May. It seems many operators are stingy and try to save on oxygen. This creates problems when there are delays, which are not always due to over-crowding and to be expected in the mountains. But if you have pushed so hard that you are already ‘too far gone’, disaster will strike with or without traffic jams. You can count on that. Because of this, it is very important to know how far you can go. Experience and fitness, as well as being part of a good team, will help you deal with and even avoid dangerous situations. Especially when there are many people on the hill — something that will certainly not change in the coming years, even with the new rules.

Damien Francois is a doctor and author of The Holy Mountains of Nepal: The Spring expedition on Everest and the Himalaya.

Stop trashing Everest

The politically correct mainstream media has been trashing Everest for decades. No journalist, newsman or foreign seems to be able to counter the misleading narrative that Everest is ‘the world’s most trashed summit’. To me, the deplorable valley of Khumbu is as clean as the Alps, and certainly cleaner than the Real Alps in Switzerland. Yes, there are dumps here and there, and there is a trash disposal issue. But the garbage is being managed, and it can no longer be called the trashiest peak.

Everest Base Camp (Lukla) itself, where up to 1,500 people live April-May every year, is actually very clean. The 4,000 plastic water bottles that are thrown into a dump at Base Camp every year are environmentally concentrated and do a good job at not polluting.

At the end of the season, the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC) collect the plastic bottles that mountain burns might have left behind. I myself took part in a large cleaning campaign after the 2015 earthquake.

Let’s be honest — the garbage we see on the Everest trail and slopes is merely left there by porters. Thirty years ago, all plastic was discarded and kilo bags were carried to the base camp by local village people.

I was positively surprised to see that Camp 1 and 2 on the Western Cwm were cleaner this year than in 2018. Obviously, the cleaning operations are doing their job. There is still trash left at Camp 2 because it is used as an advanced base camp, where climbers will stay for two or three days before moving to higher camps. Much of the trash being there now comes from the tent material discarded in the ice, it is difficult to remove.

The next problem is Everest remains Camp 1 on the South Col. A large 8,000m hospital, left by Sherpa camps in the mid-1970s, still stands there. There are still empty gas cylinders, tent poles, cans and gas bottles. There are no longer anyone left living around there for this reason they are not a safe place to sit.

There is also a lack of problem with human waste but most use dump at base Camp and Jiri. And going on the Western Cwm is not really a pleasant issue.

Some have argued for a mountain expedition to clean up the summit. But I believe this is a bad idea. Waste is not the mountain, the mountain is made of nature and is sacred to peoples. If these persons who decide that mountains are holy are comfortable with climbing those peaks, why do they have to keep them dirty? Can we please stop looking at mountains as just the sites of hiking, climbing or simply for business?"
**GETAWAY**

**Karma Hotel**
Karma Boutique Hotel, located in the heart of Thamel in Kathmandu, is inspired by the amalgamation of Tibetan and Nepali culture. It has brightly decorated rooms and suites hanging everywhere.
Thamel (01) 4268551

**The Fulbari Resort**
With its distinctive Nepali architecture, The Fulbari resort offers a different space than the other getaways in Pokhara. And with unparalleled spa amenities, it is the perfect place to unwind.
Pokhara (08) 427651

**Riverside Springs Resort**
108 km from Kathmandu on the way to Pokhara and Chitwan, the resort offers a vast swimming pool, exciting activities like horse-riding and riding, ski rooms, and attention service.
Kavre, Chitwan (01) 644063

**Cora Nepal**
Cora Nepal is the perfect guesthouse for anyone looking for a quiet getaway. With its modern, minimalist design, Cora is a sanctuary for guests.
S促成 (01) 4885012

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**EVENTS**

**Object in Focus**
Globally renowned contemporary artist Ang Tshering Sherpa’s art exhibition, “... and the winner is...”, opens on 5 September at 4:30 pm.
415 Darjeeling House, Bagbazar, Kathmandu (01) 4215898

**Against the Patriarchy**
Fight the patriarchy at Kala’s 31st Year, to be held on September 2nd at 5 pm. conducted by the House of Stories, a gung-ho and musical performer.
31 August, 3pm-6pm, Kathmandu, Park (01) 429372

**Debut Fashion Show**
With models and designs from around the world, Debut 2019 is the fashion event of the year.
30 August, 6pm onwards, Patan Durbar Square

**Detox Cafe**
Looking to kickstart your health regime? Detox Cafe is the place for you. With all their healthy smoothie bowls, quinoa salads and green juices, you can still eat clean when eating out.
8am-10pm, Lulus Mill, Patan (01) 4287772

**Happy Hour**
Sip a refreshing cocktail during happy hour at Thamel’s hottest new bar. Buy one drink and get one free.
4-6pm on September 1, 5th Floor, Aigle Hotel, Thamel (01) 4288280

**Kajal Rally**
Join the rally against the building of the Kajal International Airport. Contractor estimates that this would cause more than 2.6 million trees to be cleared for the airport.
30 August, 2pm-4pm, Mahalaya Mandala

**Naren Limbu**
Enjoy Naren Limbu’s blend of folk songs with modern sounds.
Embassies, Tokyo, Brussels, Peace, Soaltee, Crowne Plaza, (01) 536231

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**MUSIC**

**Art Market**
Support local Nepali artisans and kick off Art Nepal 2020 with a Saturday immersed in local handicrafts and artwork.
30 August, 1pm, the Green House, (01) 5366012

**Acoustic Night**
Listen to the soothing sounds of Pravat and Chiru at Sita’s acoustic night.
31 August, Jayourn, Bele 106 Cafe & Pub

**Voochoo**
A product of the Kallmandu Jazz Conservatory, Voochoo will be playing reggae, soul, and R&B songs this Friday evening.
30 August, 6pm onwards, Aigle Hotel, (01) 429372

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**DINING**

**The Curated Closet**
The Curated Closet will be showcasing designer pieces from Kushal Handicrafts, Bijonma, and more.
5-9 September, 11am-6pm, Marriott Hotel, Kathmandu

**La Tarte Tatine**
La Tarte Tatine, a classic tarte tatin, which is a caramelized apple pie with sugar and butter, at Alliance Française de Kathmandu’s Le Bal, 3rd September, 10am-1pm, AHA students & KU.50 students, AHA, PAN (01) 555472

**Pho 99**
With its famous drinks, Pho 99 is the perfect spot for Vietnamese dishes to enjoy the perfect combination of it.
31 August, Thursday, (01) 421887

**Alpool Buffet**
Catering to the taste of anyone looking for a buffet dish at Aigle. Only applies to women.
3pm-10pm, 28 August 1 September, 400, Aigle Kathmandu (01) 4286822

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**AUTO SHOW**
Get a closer look at the cars on display at the 19th edition of the Automobile Association of Nepal’s (AAAN) Auto Show. This year, there will be eight electric car brands and models.
27 August - 1 September, 7am-8pm, RCSC Mela, Pragati Bazaar, Kathmandu (01) 4215898

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**Mahaabhoj**
Maahabhoj, written in the mid-1940s by poet George Bajracharya, will be exhibited at the Aai Chaakub Party on 31 August.

31 August, 9pm onwards, Aai Chaakub, Pragati Bazaar, Kathmandu (01) 536231
Kathmandu is described by early explorers as an "emerald valley." During the monsoon, terraced paddies and forested hills carpeted the basin in verdant shades of green.

Today, there is barely any green spaces left. But in a small way, Spanish artist Iñigo Iriarte is out to change that. "Indi," as the Pamplona native likes to be called (in photo below), paints walls with a palette of living plants.

His geotextile murals are a moist fabric wall alive with leaves and roots, flowers and fruits, water, air and colonies of tiny living creatures. The vertical gardens are living art with broad strokes of a variety of green and tiffs of vivid moss, dahs of purple, orange or white when flowers have bloomed.

Iriarte borrows heavily from expressionist tendencies when he paints on stretched canvas. Similarly, these living compositions speak of the artist's dual love for the city and nature, but also of how they struggle to coexist.

Iriarte moved to Kathmandu two years ago with his wife and found resources and an opportunity here to venture beyond his indoor paint-and-canvas studio into open space. It all started after he was invited to not just paint the inside wall of a spa at Shaligram Hotel, but also cover a blank white wall in the courtyard with a vertical garden.

The result was a stunning green wall stretching across a dhama spot and garden like an oasis. A sudden calming presence, perfect preparation for a spa client to experience a restful treatment to come.

Kathmandu's altitude is subtropical, but its altitude lends a distinctive climate, rich with summer rain and cooled with dry winters. There is enough moisture and warmth for plants to thrive, so a cityscape of blank walls and hard surfaces could easily be engorged by vertical gardens.

Iñigo Iriarte is inspired by French botanist Patrick Blanc, a pioneer of vertical gardens, but takes an ecosystem approach to his selection of plants. Many vertical gardens fail because they are ornamental and used for a wow effect, with little regard for how individual plants like to grow.

Iriarte optimizes nature's own tendencies to create resilient ecosystems and microclimates that regulate themselves. He selects plants and places them according to natural growth patterns: those that prefer drier root zones are higher, where there may be less water. Plants that thrive in wetter conditions are placed lower on the wall.

He does not pander to those who just want a green wall — he will leave space for moss and other unidentified free loaders to convert water rich in ammonia from fish waste into water rich with nitrates and other nutrients that the plants can absorb, thus making it clean and safe enough to be returned to the fish tank in a water cycle.

Kathmandu's altitude is a boon for growing plants in the city, and this is a natural addition to the city's green space.

Iriarte's namesake restaurant, Iriarte, is alive with over 25 varieties of orchids, fuchsias, heucheras, bromeliads to bamboo and surprisingly — on a wall of walled tiles and root substrates of crumpled fabric — fruiting citrus plants. There is also rosemary, happily sticking to its sunny spot on the south facing wall. "Plant health and happiness, and their earning residents, is key," says Iriarte.

The wall at Iriarte is based on aquaponics and recycles water from a fish tank below the plants to the microbe-loaded geotextile wall. The wall acts as a biobed.
Yes, Mughlai cuisine can be vegetarian

Mughlai cuisine, or the food of the Mughal emperors of India, is known to be rich, spicy and meaty, but Kakori, a classic tandoori chicken marinated with garlic, onion, cashew, yoghurt and spices, is so soft it melts in one’s mouth. Similarly tender is Khidmat Kebab, almost a typcial mutton curry, except it’s cooked in brown onion and brown nuts, enhancing its taste.

Garlic (which literally translates as ‘sniff’) Kebab is another lamb dish, this time based on minced meat marinated with ground spice powder. This delectable kebab, with strong hints of green cardamom, is often served with a tang of lime and coriander leaves. There is also an option of Kumaon paratha, for those who would like to go for Mughlai’s complete non-veggie experience.

But the highlight of the meal has to be Kakori’s dessert selection, which we were pleasantly surprised to learn included the uniquely mitha munga Chilli. Chilli does not sound like a great option for dessert, but here the chef mines the red capsicum finely, fries it and later adds the sweeteners, making a dish as rich and delicious as mitha ka halwa. In fact, it is so flavorful that one forgets it is made of capsicum.

Kakori will be revising its menu after the festival, introducing a new vegetarian dish that is most popular during the event will be incorporated into the restaurant’s regular offerings.

Food lovers can also enjoy soothing musical numbers with their meal at rural performers crown nightly.

Mughlai food is an integral part of Lucknow’s culture, offering a culinary experience that is unique and irreplaceable.
First, internal party democracy

Editorial in Naya Patrika, 28 August

A meeting at the headquarters of the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) on Monday cautioned members not to be publicly critical of the leadership, leaders and cadre, and to channel any disagreement through established procedures. This probably means no criticism should be made via social networking sites, unofficial gatherings and meetings. A similar directive was issued in the opposition Nepal Congress recently.

This proves there is a shift in the views of both the CPN’s big parties are worried about their diminishing support and want to present a united front to threats from outside. The move also reflects an existential crisis within the parties, where various factions are engaged in power struggles. But it is not in their long-term interests to try and brush the quarrels under the carpet and pretend nothing is wrong by suppressing dissenting voices.

In his speech to Parliament last week, the Prime Minister said that the present system of government itself was being challenged. This reveals that the government is now scared of its own shadow because of its falling popularity, public dissatisfaction and its own fickleness.

It may seem that the directive to stifle dissent is prompted by a feeling that there has been an erosion of party discipline. However, the move is also a matter of greater public concern, as the Constitution envisages a marketplace of ideas and inter-party competition. The kind of parties that rule over us is determined by the kind of parties that we make. Essentially, the party leadership wants to control this debate so things do not get out of hand.

Suppressing different views and controlling the free flow of ideas will block constructive criticism from reaching the policy-making levels of the governing party. The rank and file cadre will not be heard, and will not be able to rise up the party hierarchy. This will result in the undermining of internal democracy. Such restrictions will have a dampening effect on freedom of expression and ultimately undermine the party’s democratic governance mechanisms.

Keep the debates open, try to make them decent and disciplined, and only then will we establish and strengthen a democracy fit to be called an open society.
Bayalpata Hospital represents a functioning model of accessible and affordable medical care in remote Nepal

Sewa Bhattachary

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ekal Shahi, 26, looks relieved after delivering a healthy baby girl, but her calmness belies her traumatic childbirth. Her eyes fill with tears as she speaks haltingly of the previous baby she lost and the desperation she felt this time to reach the hospital fast enough so this one would live.

Soon, Shahi is overcome with grief and cannot say more. Her sister-in-law Tulika fills in the rest of the story. The baby was in breech position, but the family did not know this until Deckall was already in labour. They took her to a nearby healthpost, where the nurse said there was nothing they could do. They went on to the district hospital in Mangalee, which did not have a surgeon to perform a caesarean.

“We drove another four hours and arrived here two in the night, and the doctors operated on her,” Tulika said. “Now we have a healthy baby girl.”

Deckall lost her first child due to the same complication, but the family did not know why the baby would not come out. In these remote mountains of Achham, home delivery is the norm and the district has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in Nepal.
A RURAL LIFELINE

Most rural hospitals in Nepal are understaffed and unequipped. Bayalpata Hospital in Achham district is changing the face of rural medical care. Follow us to this remote part of the country and watch patients and doctors talk about accessible and affordable treatment at Bayalpata.

nepaltimes.com

Building a rural hospital from scratch

When a group of Nepali and American public health students set up Neveys Health Nepal and took over an abandoned district hospital in remote Achham district in 2009, there was not a single doctor for over 250,000 people. Ravaged by government neglect and endemic TB and HIV/AIDS, the region had some of the worst child and maternal mortality rates in Nepal, and the shortest lifespan. Subsistence farmers moved to India to work most of the year so they could support families back home.

Soon, Bayalpata was treating 12,000 people a year out of two rooms, and today it sees 100,000 patients from Achham and six surrounding districts. The facility needed to expand to cater to the huge unmet healthcare demand of the Far West Nepal.

Paid for mostly by crowd-funding, the $4 million three-phase expansion of Bayalpata Hospital is now complete. Coming round the bend on the highway from Sankhuwasabha, the modern facility with its state-of-the-art architecture seems like a mirage in the middle of nowhere.

Today, Bayalpata Regional Hospital is not just unique for its successful model of a private-public partnership for rural medical care, but also for its distinctive design using rammed earth technology. An obsolete government facility is now one of the most modern and eco-friendly hospitals in Nepal, providing accessible and affordable health care to the most underserved part of the country.

“Our space was to use local materials as much as possible, keep energy costs low, and respect the local context,” explains Arun Rimal, a Nepali architect with the US-based Office of Structural Design (OSD). “The rammed earth uses local clay and sand from the river. The thick walls give thermal mass for insulation, and the skylights optimise sunlight and ventilation.”

The reliance on local material turned out to be a huge advantage because the project faced unforeseen logistical problems due to the 2015 earthquake and flood disaster. However, the four-year construction was delayed by just six months because it did not rely too much on bricks, steel and other imported materials.

The facility has a rainwater harvesting system, treats its wastewater and has a network of greywater-irrigated terraces and bioswales to control erosion and recharge the aquifer. A 100kW solar array on the roof meets most of the hospital’s electricity needs, even powering the facility’s only air-conditioning unit in the surgical ward.

“It was a deliberate design decision to work with the natural environment as much as possible and also to address the cultural context,” says Tyler Survant from Sharon Davis Design in New York, which also conceptualised the unique Women’s Opportunity Centre in Rwanda. “We had to plan for a different kind of hospital from the West here you have patients and relatives who have travelled for days on foot to get here.”

Bayalpata has public outdoor spaces and canopyed courtyards to serve as comfortable sitting areas, while the operating theatres and wards are recessed. Unlike in the US, staff housing also had to be integrated into the facility since it has full-time resident doctors, who live with their families.

Bayalpata has been shortlisted for the World Architecture Festival 2019, and besides providing vital medical care for much of the Far West, it is sure to become a landmark for sustainability in Nepal’s architectural landscape.
Retire in Nepal

As the country gets ready to hammer 2 million tourists into Nepal in 2020, there may be one category of long-term visitors we are overlooking: retirees.

Thailand, for example, is already way ahead of us in providing incentives for westerners to spend their retirements in a warm climate, with beaches, world-class medical care, and qualified masseuses. Nepal must do the same, but since the Thais are way ahead of us, we should promote our USF as a retirement destination targeting discriminated Indian gomden, tax evaders, money launderers, smugglers, alimony fugitives, deposed tyrants and tycoons.

There is a huge untapped market for thieves and knaves on the lookout of a safe haven, where they will be left alone in the autumn of their lives to plunder their ill-gotten wealth, but among their own kind. Nepal offers the perfect retirement destination for them; laws are lax, the scenery is nice and they will feel right at home here among local crooks who are among the world’s friendliest.

But just like everything else, I am sure we are going to bungle it and arrest the first war criminal to arrive at Kathmandu airport and send him over to the ICC. If we want Nepal to be a serious destination for the world’s gangsters, we have to gird up our loins. After all, competition is stiff. The Saudis, North Koreans and Burkinis Faschistas are already offering tax holidays, one-window cash repatriation and a free dental plan for retirees.

We have to loosen up our archaic banking laws to make it easy for despoits to move their money in and out of Nepal without let or hindrance — provided they give us a cut. After all, France allowed Emperor Bokassa to spend his retirement in Paris in exchange for parking the moolah he plundered from the Chadian exchequer in France. Baby Doc Duvallier also retired to the south of France with his Titon Macoute commandos and found it quite agreeable. Florida is the favorite destination for Latin American junta retirees, superannuated death squad leaders and failed coup plotters. The Saudis hosted Idr Amin in Riyadh and even allowed him to indulge in occasional cannibalism.

What I’m trying to get at here is that despite Nepal’s myriad advantages, it is not going to be a cakewalk to convince the world’s target dictators and elected despoits to retire here. What do we offer the world’s scum that others don’t?

The first thing of course is to never sign any extradition treaties with anyone. The second thing is to reduce dictatorship in Nepal so that overseas authoritarians can hobnob with our own authorities and teach them a few more useful tricks. Disband the CIAA and get out of FTPA; both have terrible acronyms anyway.

The Ace