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YUVARAJ SHRESTHA

THE REPUBLIC OF MEN: UML candidate for parliamentary polls in Kaski constituency 1, Khagraj Adhikari (*second from left*), during his election campaign in Pokhara on Thursday, while most of his voters are women. None of the 11 candidates in this constituency is female.

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Masculine election

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

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

Of the 1,945 candidates who have entered the electoral fray for parliamentary elections, only 146 are women. And only 240 of the

3,239 candidates for provincial elections are women.

"We boast of having a woman President, but the men are still the real rulers," says Mina Dhakal of the UML, who had to give up her candidacy to accommodate a man from her own party. "It is still the men who decide how many women they want in the Parliament."

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

"No matter which political party they belong to, all the men always gang up to stop women from coming to the frontline," says Bhattarai.

Nepal has more women (51%) than men (49%). But the percentage of female voters (49%) is less than that of the male (51%). Election Commissioner Ila Sharma says: "It underscores an uncomfortable truth that women are still less politically aware than men."

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

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

Sociologist Chaitanya Mishra says: "Men, especially in villages, engage more in social interactions, so they end up influencing how their wives vote."

More on page 5

buzz

GO EAST

Kangchenjunga's biodiversity is unparalleled in Nepal's Himalaya

PAGE 8-9

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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

HEALTH TIP

An investigative story about the national health insurance plan of the government in last week's edition of this paper generated a lot of debate. The Act was pushed through Parliament by former Health Minister Gagan Thapa as one of its last pieces of legislation before it was dissolved (see article he co-authored, below), and it immediately got a chorus of welcome as a first step in ensuring affordable and accessible health care for all Nepalis.

We agree that it was a step forward after many decades of dilly-dallying by successive governments. The need for universal health care is great at a time when government hospitals continue to be under-funded and over-burdened, and private institutions are so commercialised that they are out of reach of the majority of Nepalis. Filling the gap are PPP models like Patan and Dhulikhel community hospitals, Bayalpata in Achham run by Possible Nyaya Health, the hospitals supported by the United Mission to Nepal, and the dozen or so district hospitals that are back-stopped by the Nick Simons Institute.

At a time when Nepal's disease burden is shifting from infectious to non-communicable, and highway accidents have become a major cause of mortality, the country's health response also has to change from the preventive to curative. Evidence suggests that the poor are even more susceptible to chronic diseases, but they are financially much less able to absorb the costs of care. Indeed, as our report showed, even middle-class Nepalis have been pushed into poverty because of the unforeseen medical bills of family members.

Nepal needs a much more robust and egalitarian medical system, one that does not downgrade the quality of care provided by private hospitals, while upgrading the capacity

of rural government hospitals – and providing it at minimal or no cost to the patient.

The new national insurance Act requires citizens to pay an annual premium of Rs2,500 per family. That entitles a five-member family to reimbursement of medical bills up to Rs50,000 annually. There are subsidies for the poor, elderly and disabled. The insurance payout is too little: our coverage last week cited the example of a patient from Gorkha suffering from intestinal obstruction who had already spent Rs67,000 at a community hospital even before treatment started. The 50,000 also doesn't cover cost of transport to a private city hospital for patient and accompanying family members. Given Nepal's corruption-ridden system, the scheme throws such insurance payments wide open to collusion and malpractice.

A much cheaper and cleaner solution may be for the government to increase its health outlay for district hospitals so that most patients can be treated near their homes. Medical care would then be free at the point of care, facilities would improve at rural hospitals, and the responsibility for medical treatment would be devolved to newly-elected provincial or municipal governments. Only serious cases would then have to be referred to private city hospitals.

Rural hospitals can sign development impact bonds to meet targets to be eligible for grants, and be reimbursed under a formula shared by the risk-bearer investor and outcome funder. National health insurance as currently envisaged could allow rural government hospitals to stagnate further, force patients to travel to cities even for minor operations at great expense for which they would not be entitled to insurance claims.



SONIAAWALE

GUEST EDITORIAL
GAGAN THAPA, AMIT ARYAL, DUNCAN MARU

Ensuring insurance for all

Nepal's historic passage of the National Health Insurance Act by Parliament last month adds the nation to the list of countries with a solid national health insurance foundation.

Since the passage of the National Health Policy of 1991, Nepal has seen real gains in primary care, even through the subsequent decade of civil war. During this time, the private sector's growth dramatically outpaced the public sector's, resulting in a large increase in out-of-pocket expenditures on health that generally confer significant social costs because already scarce household funds for education and other livelihood investments were diverged to pay for health care expenses.

Today, Nepal's US\$16 per capita per year public-sector spending on health lags far behind projections needed to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. A recent study by Lancet Global Health found that such spending needs to exceed US\$100 by 2030.

The National Health Insurance Act has the following features:

1. All citizens must enrol to allow for risk pooling, equity and a broader political notion of an entire nation being behind a shared, public good.
2. There are modest out-of-pocket premiums, subsidised for the poor, disabled, and elderly.
3. It introduces a payer-provider split for the first time in the country's history, replacing the central government.
4. The head of the insurance board is nominated by cabinet and independent from the ministry of health. Both public and private providers that receive reimbursements will then be independently managed from the insurer.

5. Reimbursement for in-patient care includes payments based upon diagnostic groups linked to quality instead of strictly volume of diagnostics performed or treatments dispensed.

Hopefully the new Act will lay the groundwork for future policies aimed at regulating health care on the basis of outcomes, quality and cost efficiency. Nepal will need to rapidly digitise on a common electronic health record (EHR) platform. The open-source platform OpenMRS it is now using in two public hospitals could be the basis for a national EHR system.

Nepal will also have to innovate delivery of longitudinal care across the lifetimes of citizens in both homes and communities, and move away from the dominant paradigm of reactive acute care. The country can leverage its rich history of community-based, preventive care delivery.

The final key innovation will be creating operational definitions of quality and an institutional framework to enforce it. Already, Nepal is moving forward with the National Health Institution Quality Authority Act, which would introduce accreditation and oversight of quality. Nepal is well-positioned to help deliver new ideas and solutions.

Gagan Thapa is a former Minister of Health. Amit Aryal is a health policy adviser based in Kathmandu. Duncan Maru is an assistant professor at Harvard Medical School, and co-founder of the Nepal-based nonprofit, Possible. A longer version of this piece appeared in Health Affairs.

Times.com

ONLINE PACKAGES



CHINESE SOLE

A Chinese shoemaker family migrated to India 150 years ago, and descendants later moved to Kathmandu, where they are still following their ancestral profession. Wong Shiao Leung makes leather shoes in Wong & Co in Bag Bazar. Join us for a close look at three generations of this Chinese family and to check out some of their best-selling shoes.



GARBAGE EMERGENCY

Kathmandu Valley is poised for a huge trash emergency since the Sisdole landfill site will soon be full. Cover your noses as we take you on a video tour of garbage-filled streets and the saturated disposal site.

READERS' TAKE

Nepali Times does a lot, but it is not enough ('Readers' editorial', Julia Thomas, #883). The elite readers in Kathmandu couldn't care less what Mr Kunda Dixit is thinking or saying. Nepalis abroad have zero impact on conditions on the ground. The paper needs to use the power of the press and bring the corrupt to justice.

Alex Shrestha

HEALTHCARE IN NEPAL

Strengthening the government health system can provide better and affordable health services or else the service provider will focus on high-end solutions which will be like the expensive Japanese system ('A national health insurance scheme is not as easy as it looks', Sonia Awale, #883).

Dipen Gautam

■ The new bond mechanism for General Practitioners is a praiseworthy step. However, the facilities, safety and other aspects should be seriously considered to make it more effective. The new insurance policy won't be successful unless there is a well managed mechanism of patient registries, basic medicines and equipment.

Bandana Neupane

■ No health care model is perfect and it is ridiculous to compare Nepal with Britain's NHS. Even Medicaid or Medicare and the acclaimed Canadian model have loopholes. ('Lessons from the NHS', Bikash Gauchan, #883).

Ram

#NEPALELECTION2017

Voting is not choosing ('Flowering democracy', Om Astha Rai, #883). Choices are made by the political parties. Endorsement is given by the voters.

K. K. Sharma

CREATING MEANINGFUL LIVES

India and Nepal have more in common than people believe...thank you, excellent piece ('Still silently crying', Kanak Mani Dixit, #883). And sad content. Our actions should be directed to help create meaningful happy lives for the have-nots; instead the morons have waged war, destruction, corruption.

Anonymous

WHAT'S TRENDING



In perfect harmony

by Kunda Dixit
A multimedia view of Austrian architect and conservationist Götz Hagmüller's memoir of his work preserving Kathmandu Valley's heritage monuments was widely shared on social media. If you missed it, you can still go online for a visual tour of this two-volume illustrated autobiography: nepalitimes.com.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Most popular on Twitter

A national health insurance scheme isn't as easy as it looks

by Sonia Awale, Bikash Gauchan
The new national health insurance plan may not make medical care in Nepal more affordable and accessible. Our report and column generated heated debate online about universal health care. Visit nepalitimes.com to read feedback and let us know what you think.

Most commented

KOREA KAFALA

by Om Astha Rai and Seulki Lee
As in Malaysia and the Gulf, an alarming number of Nepali migrant workers have died sudden deaths in South Korea. 40 have committed suicide since Korea began to hire unskilled Nepali workers under its Employment Permit System (EPS) in 2008. Our coverage from the Korean capital Seoul was the most read story last week.

Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS

Kunda Dixit @kundadixit
New national health insurance plan will not make medical care in #Nepal more affordable and accessible. Goal should be free treatment at point of need. @SoniaAwale investigates in @nepalitimes http://bit.ly/2ACHvZQ

askcancerdoc @Oncn
Free treatment at point of care and clearly defined limit that government can afford as there is no limit on how much one can spend to get health care.

Nepali Times @nepalitimes
EDITORIAL The so-called left alliance (made up of crony communists) & the so-called centrist NC (crony capitalists) have now converged to such an extent that it's impossible to tell the difference between Comrade Napoleon & Farmer Jones. http://bit.ly/2i71uZ9 #NepalElection2074

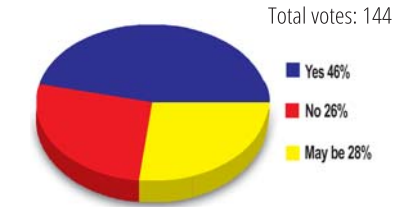
Karma Tenzing @karma10zing
Musings of what happens when pseudo #Commies meet wannabe #Capitalists? In the end, we're all screwed! #NepaliTimes #Nepal

Sudeep Khaniya @sudeepkhaniya
As long as democracy serves skinny dames and fat cats, its alright.

Times

Weekly Internet Poll #884

Q. Are you planning to enrol in the new national health insurance scheme?



Weekly Internet Poll #885
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Following recent high-profile arrests, do you think the CIAA is now committed to punishing corrupt officials?



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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER



A carbon neutral Nepal is possible

We just need the right policies to switch to water and sunlight

The Rastra Bank is concerned that Nepal’s import of petroleum products, vehicles and spare parts is going up, and the value of remittances coming into the country is starting to decline.



1/2 FULL
Anil Chitrakar

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

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

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

We recently celebrated the Chaat festival by worshipping the sun and water — the sources of all life on Earth that are at the centre of our faith. Given the dangerous



state of Nepal’s future balance of payments, it may be good to make the sun and water also the centre piece of Nepal’s economy as well as of our development and energy policy.

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

Our forebears understood the importance of solar and hydropower, which is why they accorded religious significance to them at Chaat. Which is why Nepal should have a Chaat energy policy, to save the country from bankruptcy. With the bumper rice harvest this year, again a gift from the sun and water, imagine how much husk and straw we have for fodder and fuel.

The last Power Summit organised by Independent Power Producers Association of Nepal

(IPPAN) declared that Nepal could and would generate 10,000MW of hydropower in the next 10 years. The politicians who were in attendance said 10,000 was not ambitious enough: they doubled the number and also reduced the number of years to achieve the goal.

The core issue is not how many thousand megawatts we can generate but whether we have an economy that can consume that power. Rice cookers are a good start. An average Nepali eats 146kg of rice a year, which translates into a lot of LPG import we could reduce. Electrical appliances, vehicles, transport and even storage batteries could reduce our dependence on imported gas, petrol and diesel.

All of us pulled out our rice cookers to substitute for LPG during the Indian blockade. If the NEA could set a differential price for non-peak time use of electricity, many would start using these appliances more. We have to become more creative in how we utilise our plentiful natural resource biomass, agriculture waste and waste in general as energy.

If Bir Hospital can convert its waste into fuel, everyone else can. Poultry and dairy farms are already taking the lead, creating

mini grids, and there is a policy in place for net-metering and selling the surplus back to the grid. The buyback rate for roof-top solar is very attractive. We only need to upgrade local transformers and every Nepal will be eligible to be members of IPPAN. All citizens can be independent power producers.

The first daytime end use of any local hydro plant must be cable bridges and cable cars for the transport of goods. Bir Bahadur Ghale (see *Nepali Times*, #786) has shown us the way for many years in Barpak (*Nepali Times*, #760). The load factor ensures profitability of these local power plants. A good hybrid energy project would be where we supplement all run of the river power plants with 5-6 hours of storage by erecting solar panels to generate power during the day and having a small storage capacity to enable us to generate power during times of peak demand.

Should we do it now, or wait till fossil fuel imports keep rising and remittances keep falling to the point where we are unable to pay? History provides us with the current opportunity to get on the path of a clean and carbon neutral Nepal. Let us grab it. 🇳🇵

Anil is President of Siddharthinc

Burma’s final solution

The Rohingya have been fleeing persecution in Burma for decades

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



GUEST COLUMN
Tapan Bose

Rangoon calls the Rohingyas illegal immigrants, despite evidence that they inhabited the Arakan territory for hundreds of years prior to colonial rule. Persecution of the Rohingyas has worsened since the democratic forces have been sharing power with the military in Burma.

It seems to be Burma’s ‘final solution’ to expunge from its territory, and its 200-year history of migration, the minority it persists on labeling ‘Bengali’. If this massacre continues, the entire remaining Muslim population of Rakhine state could flee to neighbouring countries by the end of the year.

Rendered stateless since the 1970s, Rohingyas have been fleeing persecution into largely Bangladesh but also India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and in leaky boats to Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia. After the recent cycle of violence and flight in the last three months, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has registered 537,000 new arrivals in Bangladesh alone.

The International Permanent Peoples Tribunal (September 2017) has ruled the Rohingya crisis as genocide, denouncing the United Nation’s use of the term ethnic cleansing as a ‘euphemism’ with ‘no basis in international law’. After a week-long hearing at the Tribunal, held at the University of Malaya, Judge Daniel Feierstein stated that the Burmese government was guilty of “war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide”.

The international community’s low-level



response to the scale of the human rights and humanitarian emergency and its lack of will to pressure Myanmar can only reinforce the vulnerability of an oppressed and abandoned peoples to extremist influences in a volatile region. International aid agencies estimate that barely 27% of urgently needed help is available.

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

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told UN Secretary-General António Guterres that China supports efforts by Burma to protect its national security. Indian Prime Minister Modi, on a visit to Burma in the midst of the violence in August,

echoed, without reservation, the Burmese government’s rhetoric branding the Rohingya as ‘terrorist’ and justifying the military action. (Subsequently, India has extended generous humanitarian assistance to Bangladesh.)

India is expanding its military engagement with Burma and has announced support for its fight against Muslim ‘terrorists’ who are trying to establish an independent Rohingya state. India has also said that it will deport 40,000 Rohingya who fled to India for asylum in the 2012 cycle of violence. The Indian government asserts that the Rohingya refugees are connected with ISIS and Pakistani militants. No evidence has been produced. India has not supported Bangladesh’s call for a Commission of Inquiry into the violence. This stems from the ruling BJP’s ‘Islamophobia’ as well as domestic political calculations that a tough line on Muslim refugees will play well with the party’s Hindu nationalist base.

Meanwhile, ASEAN’s principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states has stymied any regional response and constrained member states Indonesia and Malaysia from doing more. The Organisation of Islamic Conference member countries have been loud in rhetorical condemnation but short on action and financial assistance.

The major weakness of international protection mechanisms for stateless persons is non-applicability of international law within the sovereign jurisdiction of states, where the majority of stateless persons live. The states control their borders, frame immigration policies and decide who should be allowed to enter their territory and who should be rejected.

The present immigration laws, policies and practices of most states do not make a distinction between stateless persons and other migrants.

Stateless persons cannot return to the country that has taken away their citizenship. The massive violation of human rights of the ‘stateless’ Rohingya people and the resultant humanitarian crisis calls for an urgent need for states to recognise the special characteristics and the vulnerability of stateless persons who do not have the ‘right to have rights’.

The fact that the stateless Rohingyas have no country to return to poses a serious political crisis for the entire region. The states and the civil society of South and South East Asia need to address the issue of the creation of statelessness urgently in the interest of the peace, prosperity and political stability of the region. 🇲🇲

Tapan Bose is Secretary General of the South Asia Forum for Human Rights



NC parliamentary candidate Devraj Chalise with supporters in Kaski-3

YUVARAJ SHRESTHA

Last month, UML headquarters instructed its local committee to recommend three candidates for parliamentary elections from Kaski 3. But there were four aspirants – two men and two women – and nobody agreed to back off.

So the party decided to hold an internal election to choose three candidates, but two male aspirants were not required to enter the fray. The voting took place only to choose one of the women aspirants.

Says ex-MP Sita Giri, who was defeated: “It was just an example of how men always cheat women in politics.”

Giri raised the issue of discrimination, but says party Chair KP Oli didn’t really listen. “He (Oli) said: ‘I’ll see, but he never sees it.’”

The problem is not just within the UML. All the three major parties (NC, UML and Maoists) have fielded only 24 women candidates for parliamentary polls, aiming to ensure their 33% representation through the PR quotas.

In Nepal, the number of male voters is (7,776,627) higher than that of females (7,651,140) even though the male population is actually less than the number of women. Some districts with a higher rate of outmigration have more female voters, but even these districts have very few women candidates.

In Jhapa, for example, female voters outnumber male. But only 2 of the 57 candidates contesting parliamentary elections in five constituencies in the district are women. The UML-Maoist alliance has fielded just one female candidate. The NC has not chosen a single female representative. Most of these candidates are pitted against heavyweight candidates like UML’s Oli, NC’s Krishna Sitaula or RPP’s Rajendra Lingden.

Similarly, only 4 of the 83 candidates contesting provincial elections in 10 different

constituencies of Jhapa are women. Most of these female candidates have been fielded by fringe parties, and they are unlikely to win a seat.

“These elections have shown how deeply entrenched patriarchy

Of men, by men, for men

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

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

Yuvaraj Shrestha in Pokhara and Gopal Gartaula in Jhapa

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BIZ BRIEFS

Women’s business

The Nepal chapter of Business and Professional Women (BPW) scored a first at the recent 29th BPW International Congress held in Cairo. BPW Nepal and its president Ambica Shrestha both received a special



Gertrude Mongella Award. The Nepal team also won the ‘Power to Make Difference through Action’ project competition, for its work on post-earthquake reconstruction. Young BPW Nepal President, Neelima Basnet, was elected as an international representative.

Turkish profits

Turkish Airlines marked a record 25% increase in net profit in the 3rd quarter of 2017 compared to the same period in 2016, which equals a gain of \$939 million.

VERNA arrives

Hyundai Automobiles has launched The Next Gen ‘VERNA’ through its authorised distributor, Laxmi Intercontinental. The sedan’s key features include a shark fin antenna, 7.0 touch screen audio and video navigation, seat height adjuster and centre console storage.

Foodmandu: 7 years

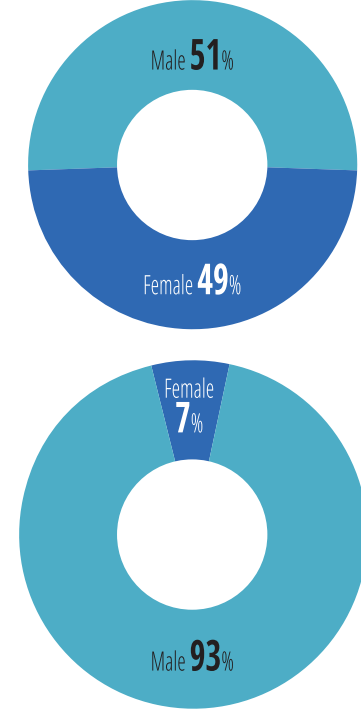
To celebrate its 7th anniversary, on 11 November Foodmandu launched its revamped website and announced an Online Food Festival 2017, which will take place from 15 December 2017.

Qatar loves pets

Passengers of Qatar Airways can now travel with their pets more easily across the



WOMEN VOTE, BUT DON’T REPRESENT



Female and male voters are almost equal (chart above). But for both parliamentary and provincial elections, males vastly outnumber female candidates (below).

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The views parfait, the light magnifique

Filming luxury fashion brand suitcases at dawn on Lake Taupo



PHOTO COURTESY: ERIC VALLI

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



SO FAR SO GOOD
Lisa Choegyal

high mountain scenery? Something more generic, mountain landscapes that could be anywhere.” In the movie business we are used to never saying no, throwing money at problems and facing

outrageous demands, but never had the Himalaya been so summarily dismissed. The French production manager needed locations for luxury fashion brand luggage – not living models, but suitcases out of a Paris museum, so precious that they would need their own security guards. “Of course,” I sighed, masking my irritation. “Let me get back to you.” Thus it was that a few months later I stood beneath lush grey-green foliage on the northern edge of Lake Wakatipu in New Zealand’s South Island. Its peaty, luminous surface reflected rocky peaks, spiky cabbage trees and a clear blue antipodean sky. Adventure

Consultants had agreed to handle the arrangements, and were already regretting it. Caroline, who is more used to managing Everest climbing expeditions, ran her fingers through her long dark hair in frustration. “Why do they keep changing their minds? Why can’t they decide what they need and then stick to it?” Based in nearby Queenstown, the French crew helicoptered to sites on remote rivers, lakes and mountaintops — blissfully free of temples and monasteries — supported by movie Kiwis fresh from the set of Lord of the Rings. Whilst my production friend struggled with plans and decisions, Christian the chic Parisian design director delighted

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

Kathmandu and Melbourne. But we had never worked together before as he preferred to keep his projects mysterious and under the radar. With fame came a self-obsession that all of us found trying, including possibly Eric himself. It was a family game over drinks or dinner to count the number of I’s and me’s that he used in every sentence. The New Zealand photo set-ups were creative and complicated: a 1950s motorbike with sidecar on a grassy highland outcrop, a high snowfield with dogs and a loaded sled, a string of packhorses on a mountain top overlooking the lake, a rustic raft complete with sail and steaming stove, a safari tent beneath fern trees, and an elaborate treehouse deep within a beech forest. The precious historic luggage travelled in a secure truck with burly uniformed guards keeping a nervous eye out for rain. Eric Valli worked his magic, Christian continued his rapturous praise of New Zealand’s landscape and Caroline’s team, despite vacillations, variations and against all odds, somehow made it all come together. I was tasked with finding a location for one last shot — a lake jetty at dawn with distant volcanoes within reach of the antique floatplane that had been found in the centre of New Zealand’s North Island. Permission was sought from the Maori custodians to film on Lake Taupo, Fred flew his floatplane down the valley and across the lake to Omori, and the French crew and New Zealand support team decamped to a rustic trout fishing lodge on the Tongariro River (*Eric on ladder, left*).

Next morning at a chilly 4am I was driving too fast with Caroline through the dark sleeping village to the landing stage shoot when a grey cat ran out directly under my wheels, killed instantly. Its pale blue collar had a disk with a telephone number that I noted before carefully leaving the limp furry body in the tall grass by the roadside, and hurrying on. A spectacular golden dawn streaked across the lake, enabling Eric to secure the perfect shot of suitcases piled on the jetty in front of the float plane. But Caroline and I were distracted, saddened by the dead cat and waiting to call its owner at a civilised hour. After a quick sightseeing spin with Fred above the morning lake and fond farewell hugs, the jubilant French piled into large cars heading to the airport and Paris. The Kiwi team packed up and left exhausted and relieved. Caroline and I drove away slowly, dismayed to see that a large green council truck with a ferocious rotor blade was closely cropping the grass verges in the village. 🇳🇿

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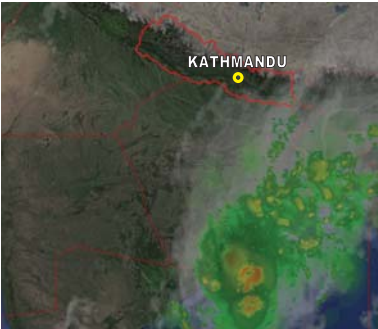
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A very large low-pressure system over the Bay of Bengal grazed eastern Nepal and will bring some cloud cover over eastern and central parts of the country, but not much precipitation. The system has also kept the Indo-Gangetic smog away from Nepal, but this may change with the arrival of a strong westerly system from Friday. Haze and smog in the lower valleys, with the season's first snow in the higher reaches into early next week likely.

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Kathmandu's sole

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

SHREEJANA SHRESTHA

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

Wong's ancestors migrated to India from China more than 150 years ago, and his father moved from Kolkata to Kathmandu during the 1962 Sino-Indian war, during which many Chinese in India were

taken to internment camps in the Rajasthan desert. The Chinese family has been preserving its roots by continuing to make leather shoes and speaking Hakka, in Nepal.

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

After arriving in Nepal, the Wongs resumed the family craft of shoe-making, opening a retail shop in Bag Bazar: Wong & Co

Chinese Shoes, which sells men's dingo boots, brogues, chain boots, uniform boots and Chelsea boots. Several other handmade designs are available for men but female leather shoes are by custom order only. To cater to other customers, Wong now also imports 20% of his wares from China.

He says people in Kathmandu still have little knowledge about handmade leather shoes and don't trust local products. Wong has also noticed the younger generation prefers style over durability, which makes his business more



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

challenging. "Handmade leather shoes are slightly more expensive than readymade ones because of their quality and durability. Even the sole has to be handmade," he explains.

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

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

Wong is prepared to expand his business, but his status in Nepal won't permit it. Although he was born here, he is unable to get Nepali citizenship because his father was born in India. "I have plans to expand the business by buying a

piece of land and exporting shoes, but I can't because I don't have Nepali citizenship," he says.

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



Come with *Nepali Times* on a tour of Wong & Co in Bag Bazar, run by a Chinese shoemaker family that has lived in Nepal for 45 years.

nepalitimes.com

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Kangchenjunga North Base Camp with glacial melt pools, looking southwest.



Selele Pass with Mt Jannu in the background.



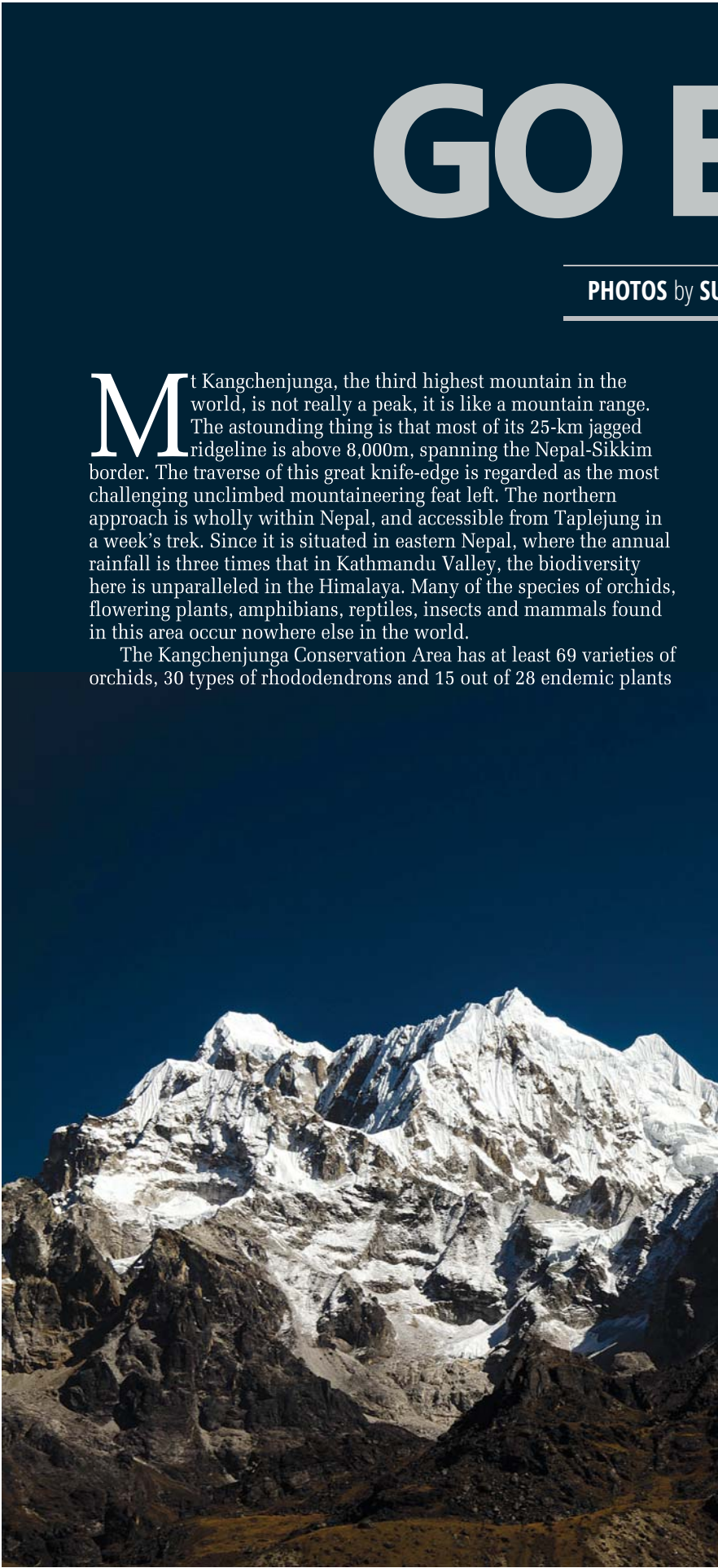
Kangchenjunga South Glacier, from Oktang.



Lodging in Gyabla.



View northeast from Selele Pass.



GO E

PHOTOS by SU

Mt Kangchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world, is not really a peak, it is like a mountain range. The astounding thing is that most of its 25-km jagged ridgeline is above 8,000m, spanning the Nepal-Sikkim border. The traverse of this great knife-edge is regarded as the most challenging unclimbed mountaineering feat left. The northern approach is wholly within Nepal, and accessible from Taplejung in a week's trek. Since it is situated in eastern Nepal, where the annual rainfall is three times that in Kathmandu Valley, the biodiversity here is unparalleled in the Himalaya. Many of the species of orchids, flowering plants, amphibians, reptiles, insects and mammals found in this area occur nowhere else in the world.

The Kangchenjunga Conservation Area has at least 69 varieties of orchids, 30 types of rhododendrons and 15 out of 28 endemic plants

Mt Jannu 7,710m (right) and Kangchenjunga, from near Lhonak.



Ramche, on the way to South Base Camp.



Oktang,



EAST

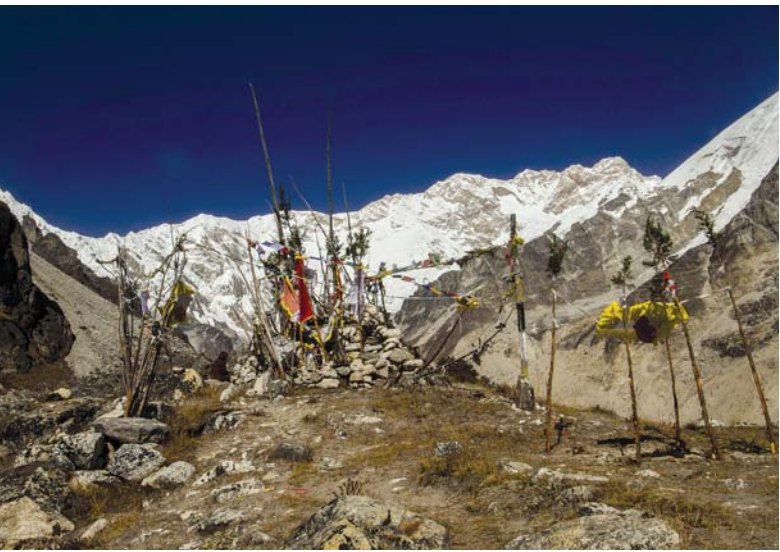
JUDHIR LIMBU

of Nepal. Due to its remoteness, only 300 trekkers visited the region last year. The newly black-topped airfield in Taplejung is still not operational, and the ride from Bhadrapur takes 12 hours, with a night stop in Ilam. The Great Himalayan Trail starts at Kangchenjunga Base Camp (KBC), and has brought more tourists. On a recent trip, we were among many Nepali trekkers doing the standard route from Taplejung to KBC. On this page you will find the itinerary and pictures from the trek.

nepalitimes.com

More photos online

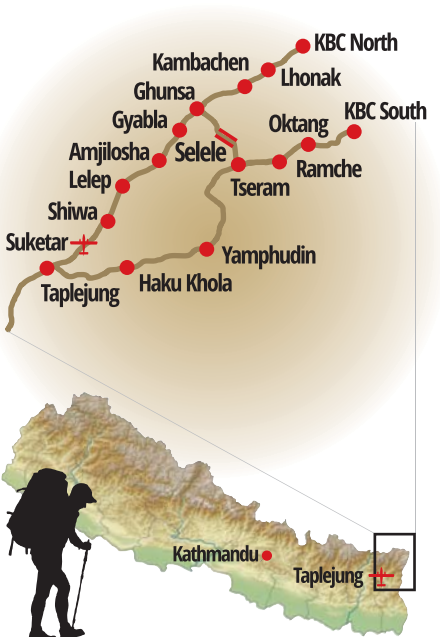




near South Base Camp of Kangchenjunga



KANGCHENJUNGA BASE CAMPS TREK



Descending into Lhonak from North Base Camp.



Trekkers en route to Ghunsa.



Ghunsa.



Kambachen.



Early morning frost in Lhonak, looking south.

EVENTS



Ekadeshma,

Pick your favourite film from the list of 99 short movies at the Ekadeshma International Short Film Festival, 2017. The three-day event includes movies from 43 different countries and a panel discussion.
16-19 November, QFX Kumari, Kamalpokhari, (01) 4442220, 9860909882

Women's walkathon,

Participate in a walk and talk program where established female entrepreneurs can promote their business ideas and aspiring businesswomen can learn from their experiences.
18 November, 8am, Starting point: Labim Mall, Rs450, ravi@urbangirl.me 9804217227

Rock climbing,

Gauge your own strength by trying your hand (and feet) at rock climbing on the Astrek Climbing Wall. The package includes lunch, bottled water and climbing and safety gear. No previous experience required. *Every Saturday, 8am-5pm, Rs5,500 per person (01) 4419265, 9841313561 www.facebook.com/astrek.climbing*



Power, politics and war,

Save the date for a solo exhibition of paintings and drawings by Mann Gurung. *8-27 November, 11am-5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, (01) 4218048, (01) 4433930*



Line,

The 1967 absurdist, one-act-play *Line* by Israel Horowitz, directed in Nepal by Akanchha Karki, is premiering in Kathmandu. *2-19 November, 5:30pm, Shilpee Theatre, Battisputali, 9840175035*



Swing dance,

Embrace the rhythm of the Swing era by joining dance sessions with Spanish instructor Maria Lopez every Friday and Monday. *Fridays at Moksh, Jhamsikhel, 6-8pm, Mondays at Nritya Aangan, 6-8pm, (01) 5013554, 9813556945, info@katjazz.com.np*



Recording101,

Learn recording arts with Manoj Kumar KC, guitarist of 1974 AD, and Manzil Bikram KC. *20 November, 9am, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, (01) 5013554, 9813556945, info@katjazz.com.np*

Tradition subverted,

An exhibition that explores self-identity and gender identification while engaging viewers in a dialogue about urbanisation and ecology, by artists Erina Tamrakar and Asha Dangol. *13 October-3 December, 11am-10:30pm, Yala Mandala, Kwalkhu Road, Lalitpur, (01) 5536690*

MUSIC



Live with Rohit,

Book your seats to watch Rohit John Chettri and THE BAND perform live. *17 November, 7:30pm onwards, Sports hive bar & lounge, Jhamsikhel, 9841320007*



Songs of the Himalayas,

Don't miss this musical treat featuring the Singing Nun, Ani Choying Drolma, and Bollywood music director Shantanu Moitra. *19 November, 6pm, Rastriya Naach Ghar, Kantipath, Rs10,000 (includes dinner and meet and greet with artists), Rs5,000, Rs3,000 and Rs2,000 (balcony), 9801141261*

Diwas Gurung,

Join singer Diwas Gurung as he plays music from his Ayurveda and other ongoing solo projects. *18 November, 6pm onwards, Sukrabar, Lazimpat, Rs 300, 9860124568, 9810260792, https://goo.gl/iEzsgV*



Tattwa live,

Make your weekend memorable at Shambala Garden with a taste of barbeque and live performances by Tattwa Band, just Rs2,000 per person (net). *Every Friday, Shambala Garden, Hotel Shangri-La, (01) 4412999*

OUR PICK



JUSTICE LEAGUE

Opens in Kathmandu on 17 November

Based on the DC Comics superheroes, the American film is the fifth installment in the DC Extended Universe. Directed by Zack Snyder, the plot revolves around Bruce Wayne and Diana Prince teaming up with a group of heroes to face the potential threat from enemies emboldened by the death of Superman. With a production budget of US\$300 million, this movie has been praised for its action sequences, but not the plot.

DINING



Café Jireh,

For a peaceful evening and the best firewood pizza. *Bhaisipati, (01) 5592102*

Capital Grill Restaurant & Bar,

Tantalise your taste buds with the best thakali khana set, known as Jimbu Thakali, in town. *Tangal, (01) 4437674*

Ventures Café,

Stop by for the best fusion menu and all local favourites and enjoy the breezy outdoor seating. A great venue for beer connoisseurs. *Baluwatar, 9851228014 Lazimpat, (01) 4410463*



1905,

Heritage boutique suites with garden dining, 1905 Suites and Restaurants is now open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. *Nagpokhari, Naxal, For more information: 9860374450*

Bubbly brunch,

Book your seats and enjoy Saturday brunch with friends and family for only Rs1,500 per person (net). The amazing shawarma and pasta won't let you down. *Every Saturday, 11am to 3pm, Shambala Garden and Club Sundhara, Shangri-La Hotel*

Mezze by Roadhouse,

Spot a superstar at one of Kathmandu's most popular restaurants. *Mercantile Plaza, Darbar Marg, (01) 4223087*



La Bella Cafe,

Let Italian cuisine tease your palette this weekend. A place to go for good portions of food. *Chaksibari Marg, Thamel, (01) 4700078*

GETAWAY



Temple Tree Resort and Spa,

For a majestic view of the Annapurna Mountain Range and Fewa Lake. *Gaurighat, Lakeside 6, Pokhara, (061) 465819, @templetreepokhara*

Chhaimale Resort,

Enjoy the beauty of nature and a peaceful weekend. Perfect for BBQs, picnics and family hangouts. *Dakshinkali, (01) 4628121, 9851181409*

Thamel Eco Resort,

For a relaxed weekend, book a room with yoga, meditation and spa at this eco-friendly resort. *Thamel, Chibahal Club, (01) 4257505*

Mango Tree Lodge,

Culture walks, rafting in the Karnali, wildlife exploration, and jungle safari at Bardia National Park. *info@mangotreelodge.com*



Gokarna Forest Resort,

A resort to relax your breathing and encourage meditation, just a 20-minute drive from Kathmandu, *(01) 4451212, info@gokarna.net*


The Last Resort,

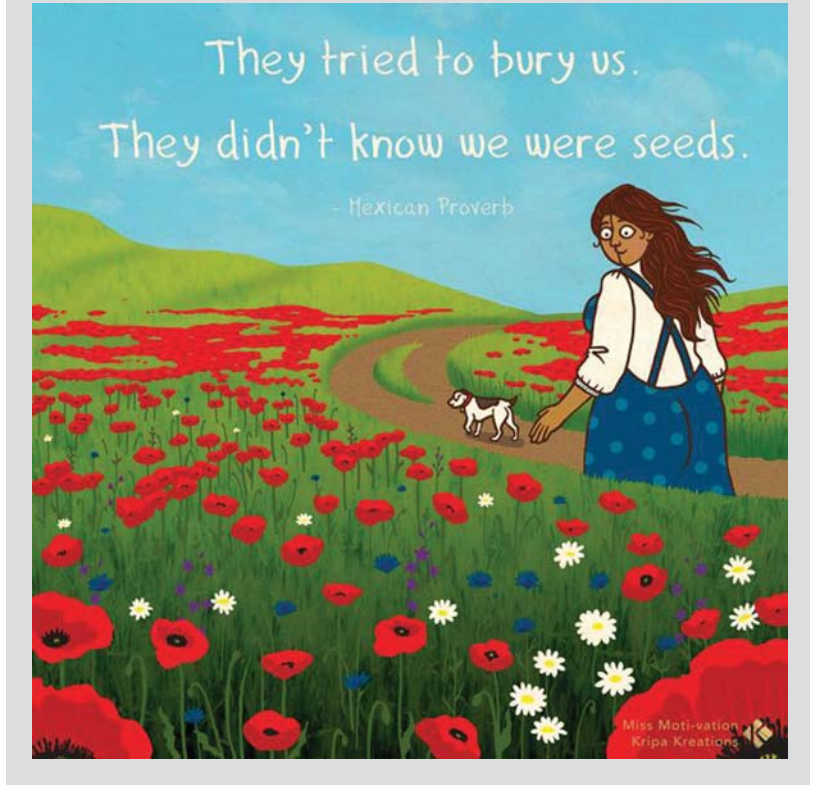
Test your limits with canyoning, hiking, rock climbing, rafting, mountain biking, bungee jumping. Bhotekosi, *Sindhupalchok, (01) 4700525/1247*

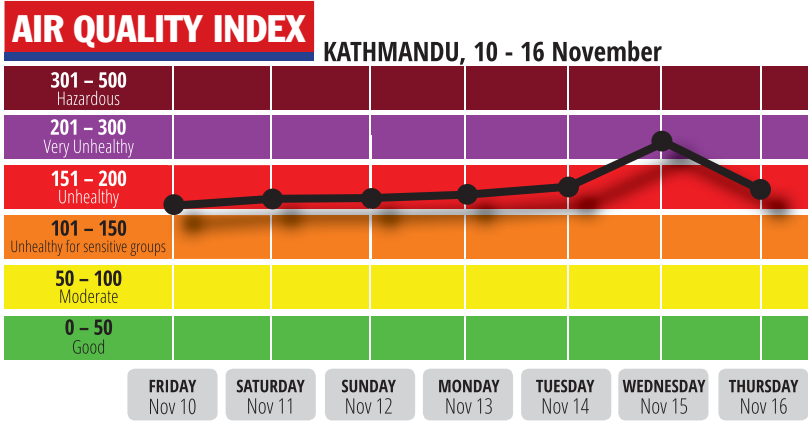
Pataleban Vineyard Resort,

Just 16 km west of Kathmandu city, the resort is a perfect place to spend your weekends with food and wine. Offering astounding sunsets and views of Langtang, Ganesh, Manaslu and Annapurna Himalaya. *Chisapani, Kathmandu, 9841679364, pataleban@mail.com.np*

MISS MOTI-VATION







As winter sets in, Kathmandu Valley is feeling the effects of the overnight inversion layer that traps warm air at ground level underneath layers of colder air. This traps the particulate and gaseous emissions from vehicles as well as brick kilns and household fires. The most dangerous are particles small than 2.5 microns, which don't just go deep into the lungs but can also enter the bloodstream, affecting the heart and other organs. This weekly summary graph of air pollution in Kathmandu is a collaboration between the US Embassy in Kathmandu and *Nepali Times*. The Air Quality Index was in the maroon 'Very Unhealthy' band on Wednesday.
<https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>

Get off the beaten trek

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

SIÂN PRITCHARD-JONES
and **BOB GIBBONS**

Written by avid Nepal trekkers, Marit Bakke and Olav Myrholt, *Adventures in Nepal* is one of the most important books ever compiled about trekking in the Nepal Himalaya.

Beautifully illustrated with exquisite photographs, clear maps, an informative style and stylish design, it serves as the best introduction to over 125 treks in the country. The guidebook is a joint effort by the dynamic and well-known Nepalese publisher, Himalayan Map House, and the Norway-Nepal Association. Its aims are simple, explained in the first paragraph of the preface:

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

As anyone who has been to Nepal will know, the two most popular regions of the country for trekkers are the Everest and Annapurna trails. However, there are many other equally stunning areas of the country, sometimes



quiet and remote, always alluring and charming, towered over by yet more dazzling mountains. These long-overlooked regions deserve the attention of a greater audience.

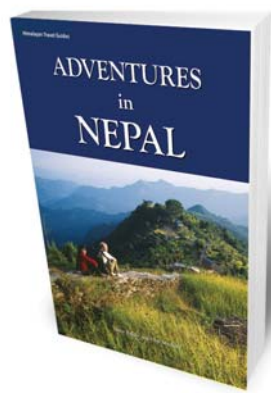
Areas such as Manaslu and Mustang are rapidly becoming the talk of Kathmandu and of

discerning trekkers looking for a new adventure. Easily accessible areas like Ganesh Himal, Langtang and Rolwaling do not rely on flights and hold enchanting secrets that few are aware of — pristine forests, superb wildlife, quaint villages and exotic monasteries,

known gem of Makalu, one of these scribes' favourite treks, a high and wild paradise. The final frontier of Nepal is the Far West, where life continues almost unchanged over centuries. The remote peaks of Api, Saipal, Nampa, holy Om Parbat and Kanjiroba are the equal of any of the more well-known peaks.

The cultural attractions of Nepal are varied and intriguing. In its first few pages, this book introduces facets of the geography, environment, climate, culture, people, religions and of course some enlightening political background. It also includes useful hints about the conduct that visitors should adopt and notes how their presence can be a benefit to a society that is very different, yet in many ways an inspiration. No one can visit Nepal and not be changed forever. Tourism is a two-way process, where both sides can learn from each other: it should be an engine for greater awareness and tolerance in the world.

Perhaps uniquely, *Adventures in Nepal* is set out with simplicity of use in mind. Treks are arranged not by regions, but by the number of days that each trekking route requires. Itineraries vary from 1-2 days up to several months for the Great Himalaya Trail route. This is really useful for all when planning, because most trekkers are sadly limited by holiday time. Visitors will soon realise that the concept of time in Nepal is far more relaxed and in stark contrast to that familiar to most of the busy, go-getting, materialistic world. The mesmerising trails and panoramic



views soon wash away those fixated habits of elsewhere, keeping track of time becomes something almost alien for a few brief days or weeks. Life is reduced to walking, eating and sleeping, the senses heightened and focused only on nature and its grandest designs.

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

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

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

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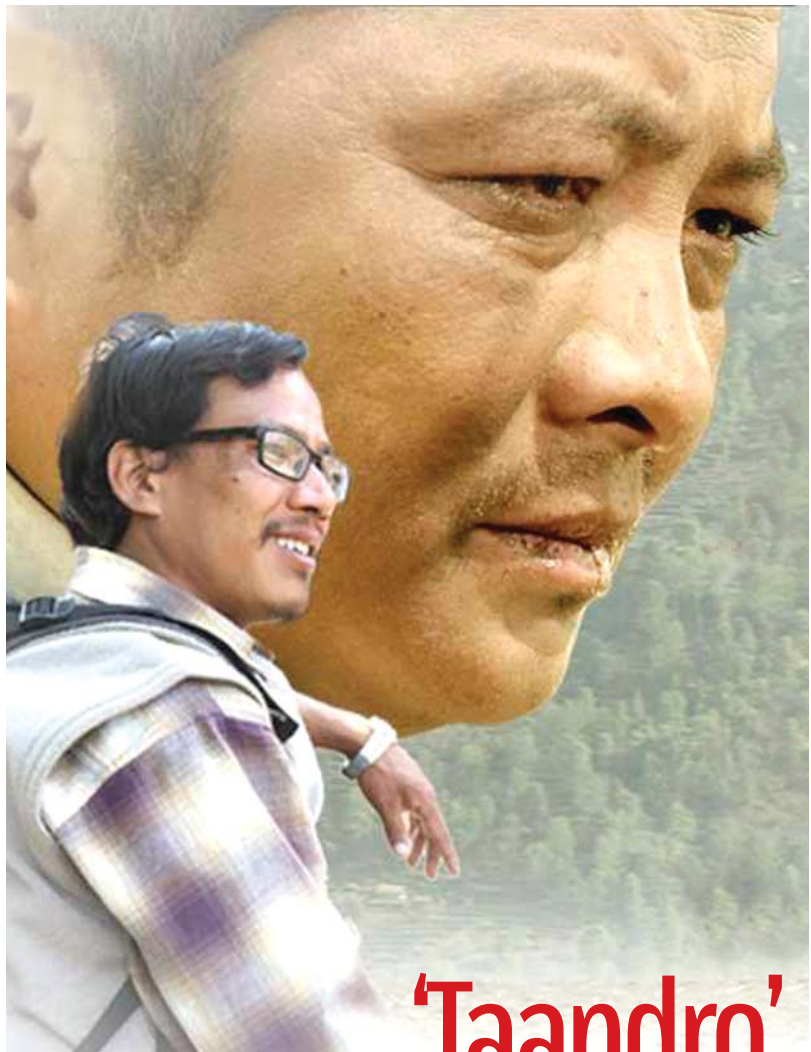
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'Taandro'

If there is one good thing that came out of the 10-year insurgency in Nepal, it is the movies that it spawned. Tsering Rhitar Sherpa's *Uma*, Nischal Basnet's *Talakjung vs Tulke*, Min Bam's *Kalo Pothi* and Deepak Rauniyar's *White Sun* are all examples.

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

Directed by Samten Bhutia, *Taandro* is based on the book *Smriti Ka Dobharu*, by Ganga Bahadur Lama, a former Maoist cadre.

Lama, also known by his nom de guerre Koshish (played by Dayahang Rai) is the leader of a cultural wing of the Maoists. In 2003, while performing in a village in Lamjung, he is shot in the left leg during an army attack.

Lama spends 96 hours bleeding

alone in a field on the edge of the village after getting separated from his comrades. None of the villagers are willing to help him, instead blaming the cultural team for the death of a woman killed by the army the previous night.

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

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

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

Despite those criticisms, by attempting to document an event of the war, Bhutia has set a new challenge for other directors. *Taandro* will also be a good resource for those looking to learn more about the war.

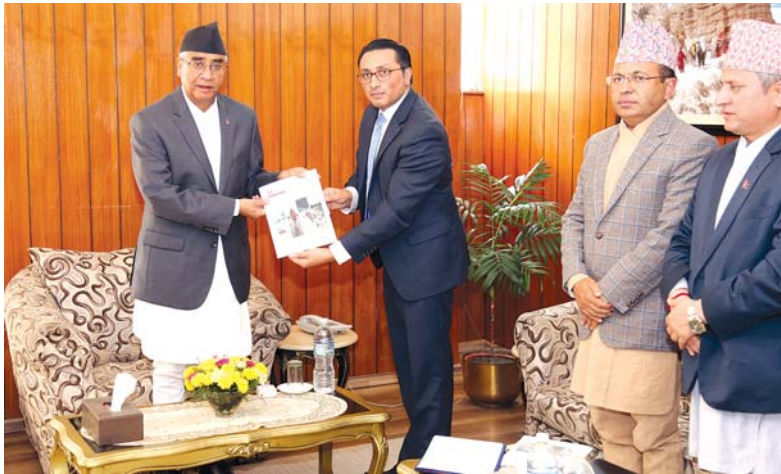
Rabin Giri



Watch trailer online

nepalitimes.com

HAPPENINGS



RSS

THE DELUGE: Vice-chairperson of the National Planning Commission, Swarnim Wagle, presents a report on the Tarai floods to Prime Minister Deuba at his residence in Baluwatar on Monday.



TWITTER

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



US EMBASSY

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



RSS

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



EMBASSY OF INDIA

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

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Election epicentres

Santa Gaha Magar in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 12-18 May



The first parliamentary and provincial elections under the new Constitution, on 26 November and 7 December, could produce upset victories that could possibly reshape national politics.

Almost all top leaders of major parties have entered the electoral fray, but their wins are not guaranteed, and their shock defeats could make or break new alliances. Prime Minister and Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba has won all five parliamentary elections since 1991, but his victory is not certain this time. If the results of the last local elections are any indicator, the NC is behind the UML-Maoist coalition by at least 8,000 votes in Deuba's Dadeldhura constituency.

To make matters worse for



Deuba, there is a feud between NC Dadeldhura committee President Karna Malla and ex-President Raghubir Bhatta. The Malla group even organised a rally against Deuba ahead of local polls. Observers say the rift and the left alliance could be bad news for Deuba. And if he bites the dust, his arch-rival within the NC, Ram Chandra Poudel, could

consolidate his grip over the party. But even Poudel's fate in his native Tanahun is far from certain because of the mutiny of his party colleague Govinda Raj Joshi. Although the Election Commission nullified Joshi's candidacy because of his involvement in a corruption case, he is spearheading a campaign to defeat Poudel.

CPN (Maoist-Centre) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal is much stronger than his rival Bikram Pandey of the RPP in Chitwan 3, especially after forging an alliance with the UML. But the animosity between the local cadres of the UML and the Maoist, caused by the Bharatpur fracas during local

elections, has not yet healed. Thousands of UML supporters are unlikely to vote for Dahal.

If Dahal suffers a shock defeat in Chitwan, he might reconsider his party's alliance with the UML. With the NC still trying to charm him out of the UML's embrace, the possibility of a renewed partnership between Deuba and Dahal cannot be ruled out just yet.

Unlike Deuba, Poudel and Dahal, UML Chair KP Oli's win is certain. The UML has a strong organisational base in Oli's Jhapa 5 constituency, which has been further consolidated by Maoist support. And Oli's opponent, the NC's Khagendra Adhikari, is not a well-known face.

Top Madhesi leaders like Upendra Yadav, Mahanta Thakur and Rajendra Mahato are also facing tough tests. Yadav is pitted against former Irrigation Minister Umesh Yadav of the Maoist-UML alliance in Saptari 2. But the Federal Socialist Forum Nepal (FSF-N) boss is more worried about a rebel from his own alliance than the left block's candidate. Thakur is

challenged by a rebel candidate of his own RJP in Mahottari 3. Mahato faces a mammoth opponent in NC General Secretary Bimalendra Nidhi.

The upcoming elections could also produce symbolic results. If Rajendra Lingden of the RPP defeats the NC's Krishna Sitaula in Jhapa 3, Hindu royalists will feel encouraged to push even more strongly for a rollback of secularism. And if the Sajha Bibekshil party fails to win a single seat, it will send a message that Nepal is yet not ready for an alternative force.

Some prominent leaders are likely to be left out of the new Parliament as they cancel each other out. For example, ex-Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai is challenged by the Left Alliance's Narayan Kaji Shrestha in Gorkha 2. Only one of the two will make it to the new Parliament.

Analyst Puranjan Acharya says: "The defeat of any top leader will change political equations not just in their own party, but across the national political spectrum."

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A load of rubbish

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

SAHINA SHRESTHA

For as long as anyone can remember, Kathmandu has had a garbage problem. The Valley's rapid and unplanned growth, poor municipal management and the absence of elected mayors for 20 years made it a chronic crisis.

But nothing can prepare us for what is to come: the Valley's only landfill site at Sisdole will reach capacity within six months, and there are no alternatives planned.

What has made matters worse is the increase in plastic waste, and the failure to recycle the biodegradable rubbish that makes up more than half of the Valley's current garbage. Kathmandu Valley's main towns have also never developed a comprehensive waste management system that looks beyond just collecting and dumping waste.

Sisdole was meant to be a

stop-gap landfill for two years, but has been receiving the capital's trash for more than a decade. Preparation of a long-term facility in Bancharedanda has been slow.

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

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

The proposed Bancharedanda site is located on the border of Nuwakot and Dhading districts and will have the capacity to handle

Kathmandu's waste for 50 years after completion. The government acquired 90 hectares for the project, which is estimated to cost nearly Rs3 billion.

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

Dipendra Oli of the Solid Waste Management Technical Support Centre, which was previously tasked with managing the waste, says, "We sent in a proposal to the ministry but with the new political structure, the budget hasn't been earmarked for the construction of the landfill itself. Even if it was, it will still take at least three years for it to be completed."

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

New commercial startups are recycling paper, plastic and biodegradable waste, but it will take time for them to scale up. (*See box*) At the institutional level, waste management still doesn't seem to be a priority and is still seen as simply sweeping and dumping.

"The basic principle of waste management — to reduce, reuse and recycle — is not followed here. We have been stuck with the same

system that was started years ago, with no improvement," says solid waste management expert Dhundiraj Pathak.

"If we don't recover and reuse waste, our garbage problem will never be solved," Pathak says, adding that the Sisdole site is unstable, and could trigger a landslide, as happened recently in Sri Lanka.

There is money to be made converting waste to biogas, compost and even electricity and fuel, but plans to recover and treat the Valley's waste have gathered dust. Most of KMC's waste management budget is spent on transportation, and building treatment and recycling plants doesn't seem to be a priority.


"Many pilot projects have been carried out in the past: generating biogas and compost from organic waste and vermiculture, and building a fecal sludge treatment plant, but none of it was implemented on a larger scale — the municipality is clearly incapable of running it," says environmentalist Bhusan Tuladhar.

In 2009, the government announced a tender to subcontract the management of Kathmandu's waste to private companies. Six years later two private firms, Nepwaste and Clean Valley Company, were given the nod, but no contract has been signed yet.

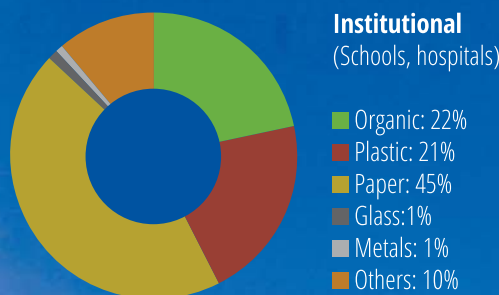
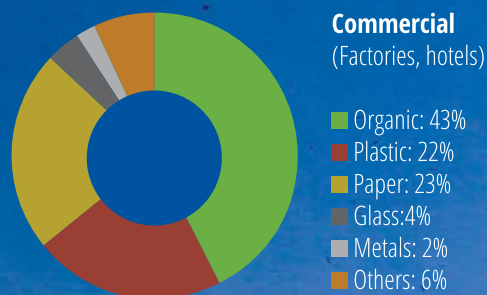
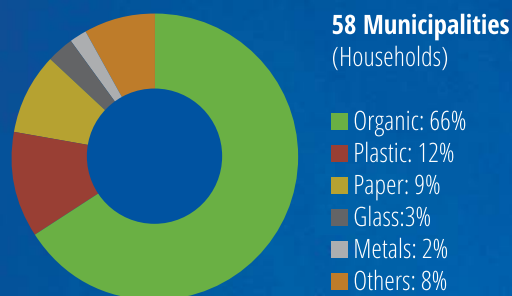
"It is a big project with huge

investment so it is obvious that it will take time. But the government keeps changing, so we have to explain and negotiate with new people every time," says Nabin Singh Maharjan of the Clean Valley Company.

Experts say Kathmandu first needs to think of a short-term alternative to Sisdole to avoid a looming garbage emergency. But in the longer-term, it is time to think of integrated waste management within the framework of new local governments.

Says Bhusan Tuladhar: "Local bodies need to be proactive and we need to come up with an approach that looks at all aspects of waste management, waste collection, waste recycling, landfilling, hazardous waste management and community engagement." 

Composition of Garbage



SOURCE SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN NEPAL: CURRENT STATUS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS, ADB, 2013

NOT LETTING IT GO TO WASTE



Kathmandu Valley is facing a huge garbage emergency since the Sisdole landfill site will soon be full. New commercial startups are just starting to fill the gap left by government neglect of managing and recycling the capital's waste. Watch video online.

nepalitimes.com 



Cash from trash

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

The project included a machine that converted organic waste to compost, and covered 600 households until the earthquake in 2015 stalled the initiative.

Not wanting to let garbage go to waste, Navin Bikas Maharjan decided to make a business out of Bluewaste. Kirtipur Waste Management Services (KWMS) was born, with Bluewaste providing financial, technical and managerial support and SEC taking care of the collection, segregation and processing. The group has now expanded to 10 wards in Panga.

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

“Most households here convert biodegradable waste to compost on their own: we mostly get inorganic trash,” says Maharjan. Each household pays Rs 250 to 450 a month for the service, depending on the amount of waste they generate. Households that cannot afford the service get it for free. Since the project started, the volume of waste going to landfills has been cut by 80%.

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

Other garbage startups, like Doko and Khalisisi — started by young Nepali social entrepreneurs — also fill the gap in waste management left by government and municipal neglect.

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

PLASTIC SOCIETY

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

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

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



BIKRAM RAI



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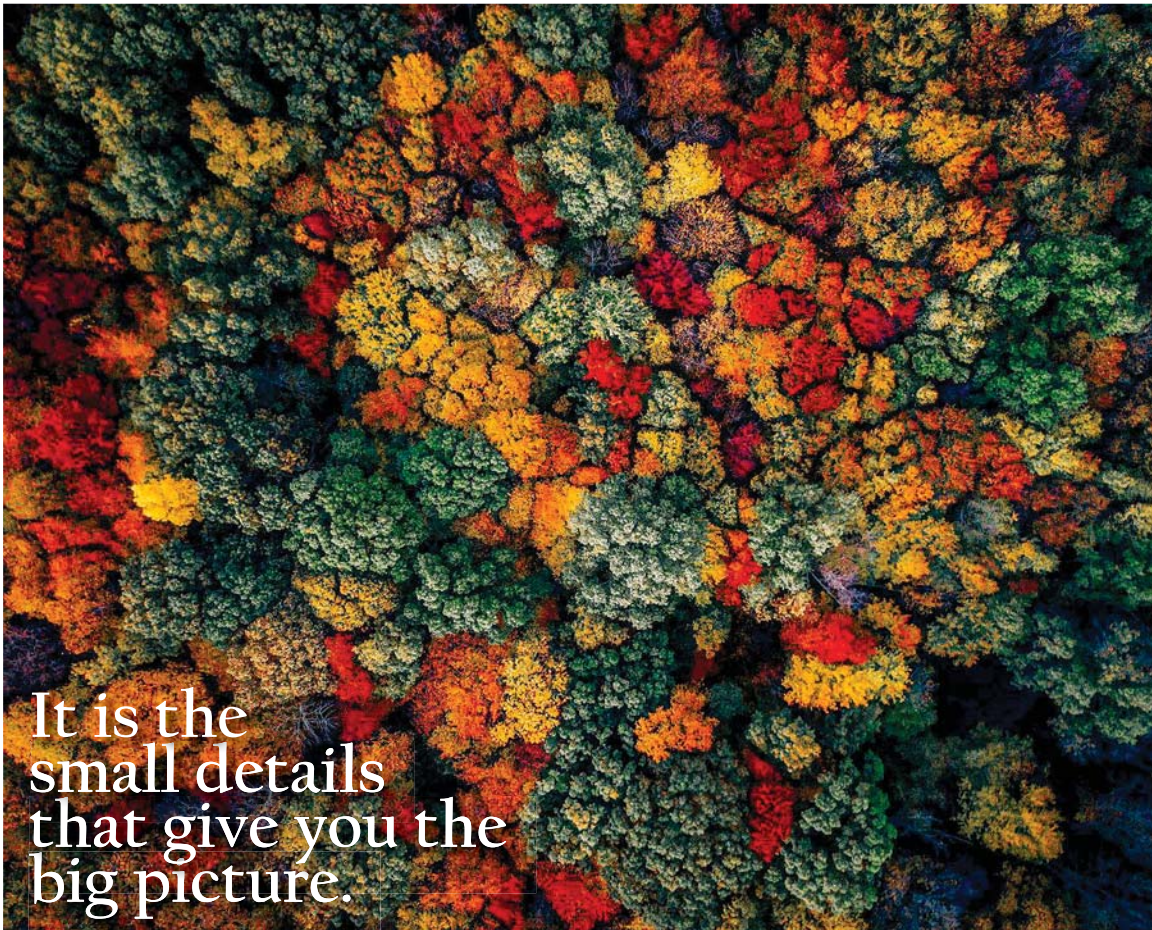
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Space cadets

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

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

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

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

The second order of business as Nepalis land on the Red Planet is to set up a local chapter of the Nepal Communist Party (Revolting) which can immediately explore astronomical kickbacks on lucrative construction contracts under

BOOT schemes. The possibilities are endless: shopping malls with multiplexes, medical colleges and fully-licensed Mars Bars.

In our immediate vicinity, China has launched Great Leap Forward rockets into orbit, putting the first ever card-carrying member of the Communist Party into orbit, completely bypassing the aerospace industry tradition of sending a hamster up first. The next step will be to launch an Even Greater Leap Forward rocket, so that Discredited Generals can attain escape velocity.

Not to be outdone, India has announced its own manned moon probe, which is facing delays because its first batch of lunatic trainees are stuck in Delhi due to smog. Ancient astrological formulae may have to be recalculated since the Indian moon landing may ever so imperceptibly send the moon's orbit around the Earth off kilter, and make us all go slightly bonkers in our part of the world.



2,636 Nepalis have booked tickets to Mars: NASA

HNS/Agencies
Kathmandu, November 9
As many as 2,636 Nepalis have booked a flight to Mars which is a part of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's In-Sight mission. InSight, which stands for Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport, is slated to be launched on May 5, 2018. InSight is a 728-day mission, which is expected to land on Mars on November 26, 2018.

A total of 2,429,807 people across the world have submitted their names for the mission. Of this, 676,773 people are from the United States, 262,752 from China and 138,899 from India. United Kingdom, with 96,241 names, comes fourth.

The space agency has said that those who have submitted their names have been provided online boarding passes. All the names are reviewed, approved and then etched onto a microchip, the space agency has said. The microchip will then be placed aboard the spacecraft, which will land on Mars.

According to NASA, "by using sophisticated geophysical instruments, InSight will delve deep beneath the surface of Mars, detecting the fingerprints of the processes of terrestrial planet formation, as well as measuring the planet's vital signs". InSight seeks to answer one of science's most fundamental questions – how terrestrial planets formed?

With such technological leaps and bounds, there is real danger that we in Nepal are going to be left behind. It is time we also went boldly forth where no Nepali has been before, and in this we have a head start, since parts of Nepal are so high they already stick out into space. As a nation, we also have a great deal of experience in wandering around aimlessly, and once even had a domestic airline called Cosmic Air.

It is great news that Nepalis will soon be traversing the treacherous Asteroid Belt to liberate the Red Planet from the forces of global imperialism and claim it for the glory of the revolution.



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