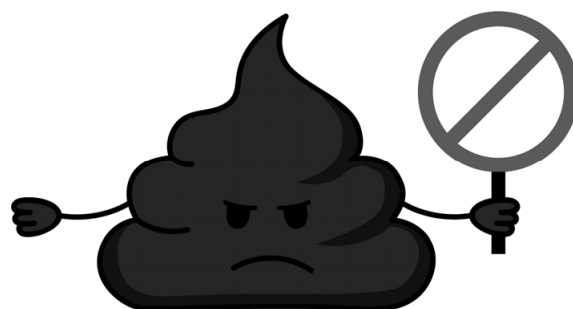


A mountain of waste

- 1 "TAKE ONLY memories, leave only footprints" is more than a clichéd hiking motto at the Sagarmatha National Park in Nepal. The large box of rocks sitting next to the metal detector at the local airport is a testament to that: tourists departing from Mount Everest have to dispose of material they have collected before stepping onto the dauntingly short runway. Fulfilling the second half of this mantra, however, is harder. Tens of thousands of tourists leave more than just footprints. 2-1
- 2 In 2017, 648 people reached Everest's summit, more than seven times the number two decades ago. Currently, their toilet waste is carried and dumped into pits near the town of Gorakshep, an hour's walk down the mountain. The amount of waste is increasing fast. 2-2 When tests were done at nine water sources in the region, seven were contaminated with significant levels of E.coli. The presence of human by-products in the water, like nicotine and sunscreen, suggests that the contamination came from human faeces, rather than that of the many local yaks.
- 3 One innovative solution could help. The Mount Everest Biogas Project, led by two mountaineers, hopes to install a biogas reactor in Gorakshep at the start of next year. All of the faeces from base camp would then be converted into two by-products: fertiliser and ethane gas, possibly for cooking. 2-3



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