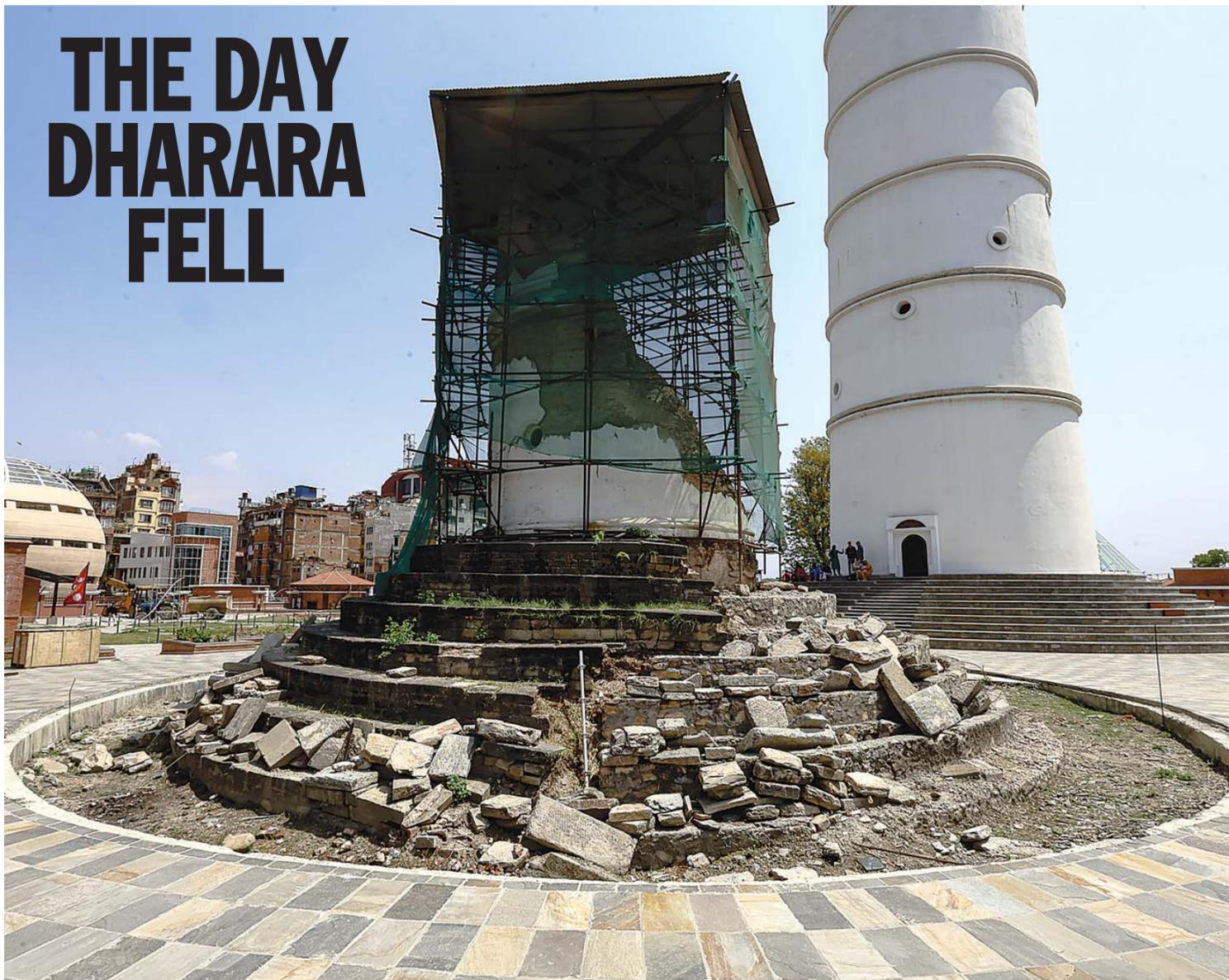


standard chartered



ISSUER RATING BY ICRA [NEPAL]

► Nepal's safest bank. Five times in a row. ◀



SUMAN NEPAL

## THE DAY DHARARA FELL

■ Shristi Karki

Dharara must have been an eyesore when it was first built in 1825. The Moghul-style minarets towered over the low brown tile roofs of Kathmandu.

Prime Minister Bhimsen Thapa erected two towers at the gate to his palace as a symbol of the power he wielded before palace intrigue and rivalry led to his downfall.

The towers collapsed in 1833, and only one of them was rebuilt to be damaged in a lightning strike in 1856. It was destroyed again in the 1934 earthquake, rebuilt and once again collapsed on 25 April 2015, killing about 180 people who were sightseeing from the top that fateful Saturday (page 5).

A chubbier replica now stands next to the stump of the earlier structure that has been preserved as a monument to the earthquake exactly ten years ago. For many

in Kathmandu and Nepal, the destruction of the iconic tower has become a motif of the 2015 disaster.

More than 180 bodies were pulled out of the rubble from the collapsed Dharara after the earthquake, although there were some miraculous escapes — like Sanjib Shrestha and his friend Ramila Shrestha who were on a secret tryst on top of the tower when it started swaying.

They held on the railings of the balcony as it tottered and fell. Both were thrown off and survived the 62m fall. Sanjib came to in the pavement outside Bir Hospital and Ramila was rushed to the Trauma Centre. A nearby CCTV camera actually recorded at the edge of its frame the Dharara collapsing that day.



At nearby Te Bahal, Prabhakar Nakarmi and his family had just returned to their house that day from a trip to Bungamati that day exactly 10 years ago. He had put the kettle on for tea and looked out of the window of his house. It was a Saturday, and he could see more people than usual high up on the balcony atop of Dharara.

“The weather had turned gloomy, and I had an uneasy feeling,” he recalls. “It may have been a premonition, but I even remember thinking that if an earthquake struck right then, a lot of people in Dharara were going to die.”

Sure enough, his house began to shake. Nakarmi's only thought was to gather his two young daughters and get out of his house. In his panicked rush, he did not even notice that Dharara had collapsed.

Nakarmi and his family stayed in a tent in Tundikhel for a month before returning to their house,

where he also runs a sewing machine repair shop on the ground floor.

“Now, the windows of the house rattle a bit when vehicles pass by,” says Nakarmi, now 67. “But my house is strong, it withstood the 1934 earthquake, and it survived 2015.”

FULL STORY PAGE 5



SURVIVING THE FALL

Sanjib Shrestha and Ramila Shrestha were on a Saturday outing on top of Dharara on 25 April 2015 when the earthquake struck and the tower fell. Both were thrown off the balcony, and survived the 62m fall. Watch the video on Nepali Times' YouTube channel.

BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER  
**New Orleans Café**  
Thamel 01-4700736

21 YEAR

Outsource Your Non-Core Staff Through **Suvidha Staffing**

Licensed Company by DOL, MOLESS  
ISO 9001:2015 Certified  
100% Statutory Compliance

+977-9704805213  
www.suvidhasewa.com.np

#1 DIGITAL WORLD

**eScan** Anti-Virus

TOTAL PROTECTION for Computers, Mobiles & Tablets

An ISO 27001 Certified Company  
Contact no.: 01-4330980  
www.escanav.com

YOUR WELL-BEING IS YOUR GREATEST WEALTH

**TRANQUILITY SPA**  
"Balancing Body, Mind and Spirit"

NOW OPEN AT DURBAR MARG-1, KATHMANDU. DURBARMARG PH-5321454 LABIM MALL PH-9801270033

UNITED COLORS OF BENETTON.



BIKRAM RAI / NT ARCHIVE

## Disaster Journalism

It is perhaps only when they become a part of the story they are reporting that journalists realise just what a narrow segment of reality they depict in the coverage of a crisis.

This is especially true when foreign correspondents report on a disaster like the earthquake that hit Nepal on 25 April 2015.

For the first seven days, as videos and photographs of a devastated city were broadcast around the world on TV and the internet, my family got frantic calls from friends and relatives. They seemed surprised that we were still alive, that our house was intact, we had food and water, or that they could even make that phone call.

Like everyone else, they had seen images of Kathmandu Valley's historic monuments reduced to rubble, piles of bricks where people's homes used to be, and photographs taken from rescue helicopters of destroyed villages clinging precariously to steep mountainsides. These apocalyptic scenes had convinced them that nothing was left.

Yet 80% of the houses in Kathmandu Valley were intact. Even in the historic heart of the city, the main temples and palaces were still there. The only thing different in most neighbourhoods after the earthquake was that there weren't the usual traffic jams.

In fact the first foreign correspondents to parachute in the next morning were surprised on the drive into the city that they didn't spot a single ruined building. Had they flown into the wrong hotspot by mistake?

Many of us in the media are accused of distortion by being selective in what we choose to report. Some foreign correspondents are careful not to fall into that trap -- trying instead to break away from stereotypical coverage and catch a deeper understanding of what is really happening beneath the surface, or away from the spotlight. Still, there is a formula for news and it's hard to file a story that doesn't fit it.

Which is why after every disaster it is, quite literally, the same old story.

The international media arrives in herds and hunts in packs. Everything has to conform to a preordained script: you parachute in and immediately find good visuals of 'utter devastation'; recruit an English-speaking local who does not need subtitled; trail the rescue teams with sniffer dogs you flew in with.

Then it's back to the hotel bar to swap stories of derring-do, before calling the desk to plan tomorrow's story of slow government response, and the day after tomorrow's account of yet another survivor pulled out alive. After that, get a ride in a rescue helicopter for the out-of-town visual of utter

devastation in a remote mountain village.

To my knowledge no foreign correspondent went around shooting streets in which all the buildings were still standing. They did not have time to look at farmers harvesting potatoes by the roadside as they rushed to pan across more historic ruins. Few ever reported that only 14 of Nepal's 75 districts were affected.

No-one found it extraordinary or newsworthy that the phones were working, that they could tweet even from the hinterland, or that Kathmandu got back electricity in three days. Such bits of information didn't fit the script.

TV crews from the BBC, Al-Jazeera and others had pitched their tents (with their own Honda generators) next to each other in Kathmandu's Darbar Square, to frame the ruins of the Hanuman Dhoka palace as the backdrop to invited talking heads. No wonder TV news programs are called 'shows'.

One interviewee was asked if he could dim the lights for a Skype interview to make it look like things were really dark in post-earthquake Kathmandu. A scheduled live stand-up with a local journalist by CNN's Anderson Cooper was cancelled at 4am local time because they were rioting in Baltimore.

Such disaster reporting distorts the scale of destruction, either exaggerating the damage or not highlighting the areas where things are much worse. Because competing TV channels are in the same helicopter, there is a temptation to over-dramatise, embellish and overstate. And countries like Nepal better have their disasters on a slow news day in North America.

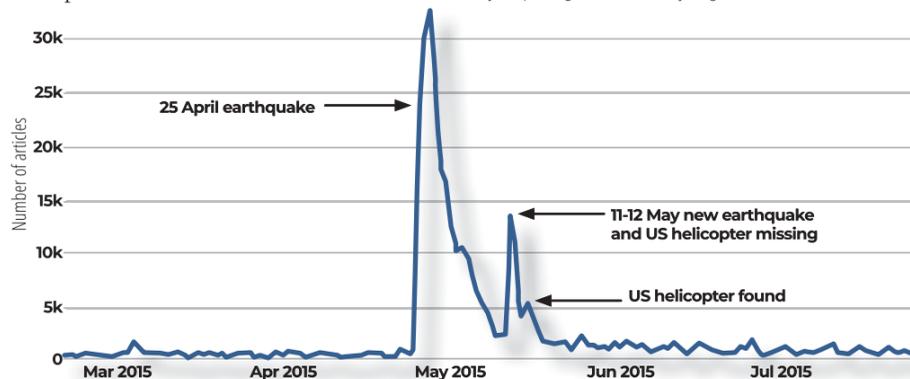
Soon, it was time to leave and travel to another disaster zone. Many international reporters had left by the time the aftershock hit on 12 May, destroying homes already weakened by the main quake.

The media distorts reality by disproportionate coverage. Facts do not add up to the truth when we are selective in choosing what to report. Facts, in fact, can lie. Similarly, when the scale of the disaster is too big to comprehend the screen is just not wide enough to show the immensity of an avalanche that obliterates a village of 500 inhabitants, like it did in Langtang.

The challenge now is to keep the international spotlight on Nepal as the country rebuilds. But the media pack has left, and with it the headlines that keep the crisis alive. Already, donations for relief and rehabilitation have started tapering off.

**Kunda Dixit**

Reprinted from BBC Academy on 26 May 2015. For a longer version of this piece, go to BBC Academy Blogs.



**NEWS PEAK** : Total number of worldwide news media articles about Nepal monitored by GDELT and IRIN News in 2015. Only articles that mentioned Nepal at least twice were counted. A vertical surge of coverage on 24-26 April is seen, but a steep drop after that. When a US Marine helicopter went missing on 9 May, there was another spike, and a smaller one when the chopper was found. Go online for more.

### ONLINE PACKAGES



The neighbourhood of Te Bahal emerged relatively unharmed from the 2015 earthquake even as Dharara came down, killing and injuring many. Watch video on YouTube of longtime Te Bahal resident Kanchhi Khadgi as she recounts her experiences on the day the tower collapsed during the earthquake 10 years ago, and see what the monument looks like now. Story on page 1 and 5.



Ten years since the 2015 earthquake, Bhaktapur has rebuilt its own monuments without outside help while Bungamati's original architecture has been replaced with modern concrete boxes. Watch the videos on our YouTube channel and subscribe for multimedia content.

#### LAGAN TOLE

Lagan's story is pretty much the story of all urban areas and towns in Nepal ('Loss of soul and soil', Suman Nepali, #1257). Beautiful homes and buildings replaced by concrete monstrosities.

Roger Ray

■ I am a resident of Lagan Tole. We have really lost the spark of our neighbourhood. There are no more traditional houses, cultural heritage and sense of community are being lost. It feels like we are living in an unknown place.

Yogina Maharjan

■ What has happened to Lagan Tole is a massacre.

Suyogya M Tuladhar

#### CORRUPT NEPAL

Our leaders seem least bothered about corruption ('Nepal strongest in corruption', Kunda Dixit, Newsletter #1257).

Shyam Mohan Shrestha

■ Corrupt politicians in Nepal exacerbate this deeply entrenched, systemic corruption at all three levels of government as well as in the media.

Dev Pokharel

#### EX-KING

Read this piece by Sam Cowan, and ask, is 'navin samajhdari' even possible with this egoist ex-royal? As Cowan recounts, he had that opportunity and blew it big time ('Tell me what the common man is thinking!', Page 6-7).

Suman Pradhan

■ At a time when there are voices out there calling for the restoration of the monarchy in Nepal, it is good to read the words of Gyanendra in this interview from long ago.

Jamie Uhrig

#### BIRGANJ VIOLENCE

The violence in Birganj shows why we need secularism, not intolerant violence from one religious group ('The sociology of social unrest', Chandrakishore, Page 6-7).

Forester

### Times.com

#### WHAT'S TRENDING

##### Healer of far-western Nepal

by Dirgha Raj Upadhyay

At a time when many Nepali doctors and staff nurses were emigrating, orthopaedic surgeon Mandeep Pathak did not just return to Kathmandu after getting an MD overseas but decided to go to one of the remotest districts in Nepal to serve those most in need. Read about his life and work at nepalitimes.com.

**f** Most reached and shared on Facebook



##### "Tell me what the common man is thinking!"

by Nepali Times

In a new addendum to his collection of essays Nepal's Two Wars, Sam Cowan takes us inside a secret 2002 meeting with King Gyanendra, offering a chilling glimpse into what would doom the crown just six years later. Join the discussion online. Full story on page 6-7.

**X** Most popular on X

##### Loss of soul and soil

by Suman Nepali

Lagan Tole survived the 2015 earthquake with minimal damage, but lost its traditional architecture as well as the deep sense of community that once defined the area. Photo feature on our website.

**66** Most commented

##### A new architecture for tourism

by Sudiksha Tuladhar

Rural architecture in Nepal is a living expression of heritage, community, and nature. By blending indigenous wisdom with modern hospitality, building designs uplift local lives and shape sustainable tourism. Details online.

**🔥** Most visited online page

#### QUOTES

**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**

In a new addendum to "Nepal's Two Wars," Sam Cowan takes us inside a secret 2002 meeting with King Gyanendra— days after the monarch dismissed Nepal's elected government. It offers a chilling glimpse into what would doom the crown just six years later.

**Sujeev Shakya @sujeevshakya**

Always fascinating to read Sam Cowan's incisive comments.

**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**

Nepal's economy is in trouble with low farm output, few industries, and heavy dependence on remittances. But the bigger issue is corruption—a problem Guardian's investigative journalist Tom Burgis defines as "the abuse of public trust for private gain."

**pigreen1 @pigreen1**

Next - gold smuggling

### 1,000 WORDS



RATNA SHRESTHA / RSS

**VLADIMIR ILYICH:** Maoist Centre Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal and his comrades raise the red salute on the 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Communist Party of Nepal on Vladimir Lenin 156<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary at party headquarters in Parisdanda on Tuesday.

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

# WE'RE ALL CONNECTED: LONDON

Connecting more countries than any other.



TURKISH AIRLINES

ENGLAND

# The sociology of social unrest

The Birganj violence last week is a warning not to mix religion and politics

During the Constitution drafting process that took nearly ten years, Nepal's various ethnicities and religions tried to define their status vis-à-vis the state. They laid down their demands, they struggled, and then forged compacts.



**BORDERLINES**  
Chandrakishore

The 2015 Constitution was a rough roadmap, but the statute could not address the divisions between various communities.

Despite its diversity, Nepal does not have a history of serious sectarian, religious or communal conflict. The Constitution's preamble accepts pluralism and tolerance, with the right to demonstrate one's faith as long as it does not infringe on the right of another's.

Authoritarianism and democracy are opposing poles of all political systems. They are governed differently, and their internal structures are disparate. Authoritarian systems exist only if the status quo is maintained by the one in power, while democracies are always in dynamic flux.

This is why democracies cannot always guarantee stability. There will always be voices using the very freedoms the system guarantees to agitate for a dictatorial regime. This can seem contradictory, but is clear to see in Nepal's present context.

As Nepali society has evolved, it has seen insurgency, interaction and intermingling, and democracy



has allowed tolerance of different belief systems.

In the past, the monarchy tried but could not fully address the cultural aspirations of the country's ethnicities. During the Panchayat,

the geopolitical need of the time was to strengthen national unity and identity through a unitary state.

Today's royalists are using the current political disarray and public dissatisfaction to evoke nostalgia

for strongman rule. In politics, there can be smoke even without a fire. The ex-king's project is to terminate the pluralism ensured by this hard-won Constitution.

There are indications that reactionaries are trying to fish in troubled waters. In the past four years, Birganj has started marking Hanuman Jayanti in honour of the monkey god of the Ramayana, and it has always been accompanied by tension with adherents of other faiths.

Last week, violence flared again during the procession, and the city was shut down with a two-day curfew called. Although restrictions have now been lifted, the city is still licking its wounds.

A religious procession has to be sensitive to the neighbourhood it is moving through, it cannot provoke those from other communities who live there. And the administration is responsible to ensure that things do not get out of hand.

The strict guidelines about the route of the procession, a ban on openly carrying weapons of any kind, and against provocative slogans directed at another religious group -- none of them were followed. Despite these rules been pre-agreed with rallyists, they were not adhered to.

Another factor that poured oil on the fire was live video reporting on social media of the procession that magnified the agenda of the organisers. Such 'reporting' by 'journalists' sensationalised the violence and helped spread it with fake videos, disinformation and hate speech.

Sharing such content also spurs copycat violence and prevents resolution. There are signs various groups are trying to mix politics with religion, and spicing it up with extremist rhetoric. There should be forceful and immediate legal action against such elements to nip the unrest in the bud.

Local problems need local solutions. Outside interference may complicate attempts to extinguish the fire. The silent majority of citizens do not want violence and turmoil, they want peace and reconciliation.

Any political force that tries to exploit the Birganj unrest to further its own narrow interest elsewhere will ultimately reap the whirlwind. 🇳🇵

*Chandrakishore is a Birganj-based political commentator who writes this monthly column BORDERLINES in Nepali Times.*  
@kishore\_chandra

## NMB BANK एनएमबी बैंक

### Turkish 3 runways

The iGA Istanbul Airport now has three independent functional runways. Three aircrafts took off simultaneously at the launch event to show off the new capability. The system will increase hourly air traffic at the airport from 120 to 148 aircraft movement and



shorten taxi times, leading to fewer delays. "With this system, air traffic flow will accelerate, the dynamic capacity of our airport will significantly increase, and we will offer our passengers faster and safer service," said Abdulkadir Uraloglu, Turkey's Minister of Transport and Infrastructure.

### Buddha to Kolkata

With Air India pulling out, Buddha Air is resuming a four flights a week Kathmandu-Kolkata route this July. Fares will start at Rs14,000. Buddha Air operated three flights a week on the route in 2019 for nine months, but stopped.



### Aloft Sales Award

Aloft Kathmandu Thamel's Sales Team won the 'Select Property Sales Team of the Year' award at Marriott's ELITE Awards 2024.



### 397 snow leopards

A Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation report estimates the snow leopard population at 397. The assessment uses data from research done between 2015 and 2024, using camera traps and scat analysis. The survey was supported by the WWF and the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program.



### Cardamom stalk fabric

Maya Gurung makes tea mats, purses, flags, and fabric from cardamom stalks and leaves in Taplejung and sells them at fairs across Nepal and north India, for an annual turnover of Rs2.5million. The goods are proving especially popular in Dehradun.

### Bhaktapur Trade Festival

The 12-day 9<sup>th</sup> Bhaktapur Trade Festival at Sallaghari drew over 300,000 visitors, and saw Rs400m in transactions. Stalls sold food, handicrafts, automobiles and more at the festival.

### Ncell app bonus

Ncell customers can get extra data on recharges of Rs100 and more, made through the Ncell App. Rs100-200 come with 200MB valid for 1 day, and recharges above Rs200 come with 500MB valid for 3 days.



### World Urban BYD

The BYD Seagull Dolphin was awarded World Urban Car at the 2025 World Car Awards held at the New York International Auto Show. The model is the best-seller in several markets around the world.



### Royal Enfield 350

Royal Enfield has released the new Classic 350 model in Nepal, starting at Rs550,000. The motorcycles come with Anti-lock Braking Systems, and are available in seven colorways across five variants. The company assembles 20,000 bikes a year in Birganj.

### IME solar loans

For Earth Day, Global IME Bank has launched a solar loan scheme aimed at businesses such as hotels, hospitals, cold stores, and schools.

### Burn promises broken

The Ministry of Health and Population has not honored its commitment to cover the treatment costs of burn victims across eight hospitals across Nepal. Only the Kirtipur Hospital has received funds, but it too has already gone over that budget by Rs12 million. Burns are the second most common injury in rural Nepal. Health Minister Pradip Paudel had touted this as a major promise.



### More independent hydro

Six independent hydro projects, each exceeding 100MW, will all receive final funds in the next six months. 11 more projects are in the final stages of securing financing. These include the 341MW Budi Gandaki and the 285MW Upper Tamor projects. Currently, the private sector produces 3/4ths of Nepal's 3,000MW hydropower.

### ISUZU x Laxmi

Laxmi Group is now the authorised distributor for SML Isuzu, a Japanese bus and truck company. Laxmi has already been selling Isuzu vehicles for seven years, and has a sales and service network across Nepal.

# Towering monument to 2015

Ten years later, survivors of the earthquake recall the destruction of Kathmandu's iconic tower

■ Shristi Karki

Kanchi Khadgi, now 81, sits in her usual spot near the entrance of her family's meat shop, and recounts what happened that Saturday 10 years ago. She was inside when the building started shaking, she ran out of the house with her daughter and noticed that Dharara was just a heap of rubble.

"My daughter told me many people were buried under the collapsed Dharara, and we tried to help rescue them," Khadgi recalls. "But when I saw parts of their belongings and clothes peeking out from the rubble, I was too frightened to look anymore."

Born and raised in Lagan Tole, Khadgi has lived in Te Bahal since she came to the neighbourhood as a newly married young girl.

"As a young girl, I used to go and watch the horses in the stables at the Dharara compound and do my washing in Sundhara," Khadgi says. "I have climbed Dharara countless times."

Except for Dharara, Te Bahal, like nearby Asan and Lagan Tole, escaped relatively unscathed in the earthquake, in large part because traditional Newari houses were packed together.

But the neighbourhood around Dharara had started to change even before the 2015 earthquake. Khadgi's own home which was a modest two-storey traditional tile roof house is now a multi-story building.

In the ten years since the quake, Prabhakar Nakarmi's young daughters (page 1) have grown into adults, and many of his neighbours have rebuilt their damaged homes and have concrete multi-storey buildings.

The Nepal Madani Masjid and Muslim Musafirkhana has stood in front of Dharara ever since they were built 80 years ago. Kaleem is a caretaker at the mosque.

Just before noon on that Saturday ten years ago, Kaleem had begun preparations for afternoon prayers. Suddenly, the ground began to shake and the walls of the mosque trembled.

Realising it was an earthquake, Kaleem rushed outside just in time to see the Dharara come crashing down into an eatery beside the mosque, killing its owner and employees. Like others from inner city Kathmandu, Kaleem headed to the open ground at Tundikhel for safety.

"Every day as we returned to the mosque for prayers, there would be aftershocks, it was a time



SUMAN NEPALI

of great fear," he recalls.

Digging foundations for the new houses in the neighbourhood has disturbed the water channels that fed the spouts of Sundhara which have gone dry, depriving Te Bahal of a vital source of water it has depended on for centuries.

"Before the earthquake, you could come and go down to fetch water from Sundhara as you pleased, but no water has come out of the stone spout for years now," says Kaleem, looking out the window of the mosque towards the ruins of the old tower. "The old post office, tax department, the businesses around Dharara, they have all gone. This place is not the same anymore."

The Nepal Madani mosque itself suffered no major damage, but added an extra floor during the Covid-19 lockdown to accommodate those seeking shelter.

Residents of Te Bahal have watched over these past 10 years as Dharara transformed from a single-structure monument to a sprawling two hectare compound: Kaleem from the stoop of his mosque, Prabhakar Nakarmi through the windows of his traditional brick house, and Kanchhi Khadgi from her usual perch near the entrance of her meat shop.

Khadgi has climbed the replica twice since it was hastily inaugurated by Prime Minister K P Oli in 2021 even before it was completed and earned the moniker 'Oli's Folly' instead of 'Bhimsen's Folly' (see box).

Khadgi says, "The new one does not come close to capturing the history of Dharara, it just does not feel the same."

Kaleem and Prabhakar Nakarmi have no desire to climb the new tower. But there is no shortage of visitors who want to get to the balcony for a bird's eye view of the densely-packed city below.

Crowds gather in front of the gates to the compound even before it opens every morning to pay the Rs200 entry fee to climb to the high viewing platform to look down at Kathmandu.

More than 165,000 people have climbed Dharara since it was opened to the public last November. The new Dharara that towers over visitors is a bigger replica of the old tower that collapsed during the

2015 earthquake.

"There were multi-agency discussions about how to reconstruct Dharara after it came down, and since it had collapsed many times before, it was agreed that a completely new modern structure would be most appropriate," explains Saubhagya Pradhananga of the Department of Archaeology.

The two-hectare Dharara compound also includes the historic Sundhara, a multi-level basement parking, along with a future museum and an exhibition hall. Nepal's historic post office and tax department, as well as businesses along the old tower were relocated to accommodate the new compound.

Despite the Nepal government's special committee that entrusted the operation and management of Dharara and five other structures across the country to the federal government, it has been unable to take over.

The Ministry of Urban Development's Central Level Project Implementation Unit (CLPIU) which designed and built the Dharara compound is in charge of operating the site.

"With this project, we have tried to build back better to create a more

open public space," says Prakash Aryal of the CLPIU.

But the Rs3.16 billion project is still not completed even though the contractor's agreement with the government expired last October. Construction of the museum and other facilities have been halted. There is no word of contract extension.

The restoration of the Sundhara spout and preservation of the base of the old Dharara remains a significant challenge as they are now surrounded by new structures.

The modernisation of the Te Bahal neighbourhood came at the cost of the ancient communal stone spouts of Sundhara, which have gone dry.

Sundhara used to be open to the community for water supply and washing, but is now dry and within the Dharara so the local people cannot access it without paying entrance fees.

Even though he is from the CLPIU, Aryal says people should not be charged: "The community is a part of the Dharara and Sundhara heritage, the government should not keep them out."

One of those waiting to climb the tower this week was Sita Ram Rai, an orange farmer from Khotang who has come to Kathmandu to visit his son and his family. Finding himself with free time between errands, he decided to visit Dharara.

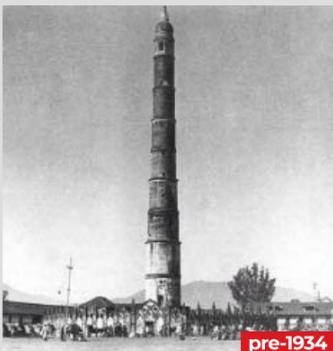
"I had climbed up the old Dharara a long time ago," recalls the 72-year-old, sitting cross-legged on the floor of the small foyer at the top of the new structure. "I was curious to see what this new one would be like."

Rai took the lift to the top, but was nonetheless breathless before he went out onto the balcony to look at the city below.

"This Dharara is much better than the previous one, much bigger and cleaner," he marvels. "I had to climb and climb the winding staircase to reach the top of the old one, but today I stepped into a box on the ground floor, and when the doors opened, I was instantly at the top!"

Rai looks around as the viewing platform begins to fill up with visitors who had climbed up the stairs to reach the top. A few minutes later, his son calls his father to join him on the balcony.

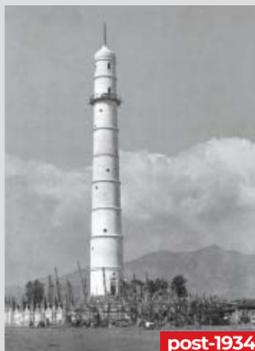
Rai gathers up his walking stick leaning on the wall beside him, carefully getting to his feet. His son then gently leads him towards the glass panel where people jostle to catch a view of Kathmandu shrouded in haze, just like it was on 25 April 2015. 🇳🇵



pre-1934



1934



post-1934

## Days of Dharara's past

second Dharara was 72m tall, and had a spiral staircase containing 213 steps that ended on a high balcony overlooking Kathmandu Valley. It collapsed once again during the 7.8M earthquake that struck Nepal on 25 April 2015.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, Dharara underwent a complete facelift starting 2017, after it was decided that the base of the old Dharara, the only part of the monument that remained, would be preserved as a monument, and a bigger replica rebuilt.

Construction work soon began to expand the Dharara premises, and the old post office and tax

department were relocated to make way for the new compound.

In 2021, a day before the sixth anniversary of the 2015 earthquake, Prime Minister K P Oli inaugurated the New Dharara, and the compound officially opened to visitors in November 2024.

Currently, the two-hectare Dharara compound includes the base of the old tower, the 22-storey replica tower, a park, the historic Sundhara, multi-level basement parking, with planned museums and exhibition halls.

Prime Minister Bhimsen Thapa built two 61m high minaret-style towers to the gate of his palace in 1825 under the commission of Queen Lalit Tripurasundari.

Nepal had just fought and lost a war against the British East India

Company with the humiliating Sugauli Treaty of 1816, and did not like Bhimsen Thapa. They started calling the towers 'Bhimsen's Folly'.

Eight years later, both towers collapsed in the strong 1833 earthquake that destroyed many

buildings in Kathmandu. Only one of them was rebuilt as a taller and more slender tower that was damaged in a lightning strike in 1856. It was repaired but could not withstand the 1934 earthquake that killed over 10,000 people in Kathmandu. The reconstructed

# "Tell me what the com



Extract from an addendum to Nepal's Two Wars, Chapter 2 in the updated edition of Essays on Nepal: Past and Present by Sam Cowan, a retired British Army general with a long association with the Gurkhas (above). The book was first published in 2018, and republished earlier this month by FinePrint exclusively on Amazon.

The addendum details a one-to-one conversation the author had in the Royal Palace with then King Gyanendra in November 2002 just after he had taken his initial steps on the road that ultimately led to the abolition of the monarchy in Nepal in 2008.

In the early evening of September 16, 2002, in my role as Colonel Commandant of the Brigade of Gurkhas, I had my second and last official audience with King Gyanendra to give him an update on the Brigade's activities over the previous 12 months. I had some 6 or 7 such audiences with King Birendra.

These were official affairs with the British ambassador of the day present, along with key palace officials and a representative from Nepal's Foreign Ministry. The two monarchs were very different in character and temperament, but both treated me with the utmost civility and made the audiences as relaxed and easy for me as possible.

It is, however, worth recording that when the official business had been covered, King Birendra, with a twinkle in his eye, often ended by asking, "Now General, what's the gossip in London?"

The second audience with King Gyanendra was my last official act in uniform. We came back to Kathmandu in the first week of November (after treks) to stay for a few nights with our Defence Attaché before heading back to the UK. Waiting for me was a message from the Palace saying that King Gyanendra would like to meet me informally:



Nepali Times Special Edition of 6-14 June 2001 with enthrone of Gyanendra.



Nepali Times 22-29 June 2001 covering the royal massacre after which Gyanendra became king.



Nepali Times 4-10 February 2005 after king Gyanendra's coup imposed media censorship.



HIS MAJESTY: Retired British Army General Sir Sam Cowan with King Gyanendra in 2002 at the Royal Palace in Kathmandu (above, right).

no uniform and no ambassador.

Although I had no idea what the purpose of the meeting might be, events in Kathmandu since I last saw the king put me on edge. On October 4, 2002, Gyanendra had dismissed Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, allegedly for failing to hold elections. He had put in place a new prime minister and a cabinet personally selected by him. When I heard the news on my travels, the people I met were generally supportive of the king's actions. There was a general view that something had to be done, the country was going nowhere, and the king deserved his chance, not least to solve the Maoist problem.

Back in Kathmandu, views were not so sanguine. The chosen prime minister, Lokendra Bahadur Chand, was a relic from the Panchayat period whose party had failed to win a single seat in the last elections held in 1999. Some of the chosen cabinet ministers had, to put it mildly, dubious reputations, and others had no record of proven competence in any field.

There was a fear that the king's real motive in dismissing Deuba was to start to reverse the democratic gains made since 1990.

I informed the British ambassador about the invitation. He was strongly against accepting it, which was probably the clinching reason for my decision to do the polite thing and accept it.

On the evening of November 7, 2002, I presented myself at the royal palace, alone and in civilian attire.

As in the past, the Military Secretary, Major General Vivek Shah, met and escorted

me into the presence of the monarch. This time, however, he was politely asked to leave the room and shut the door behind him. King Gyanendra greeted me warmly and invited me to sit down.

I had wondered, and to be truthful, had worried, not just about the purpose of the meeting, but about how the conversation might start and develop. I reduced my resolve to two points: be polite but speak candidly. The latter resolve was quickly put to the test with the king's opening words: "Sam, [in previous meetings it had been 'General', you walk the highways and byways of this land more than most, tell me what the common man is thinking?"

"Your Majesty, I have no idea what they are thinking, but they are waiting."  
"Waiting?"

"Yes, Your Majesty, they are waiting to see whether what you did some weeks ago in appointing your own prime minister and cabinet ministers is going to make any difference to their lives or whether it is just going to be more Kathmandu hot air."

"Everything is going to be difficult and is going to take time, a lot of time."

"Your Majesty, time is the one thing you don't have. You must act quickly and decisively to take advantage of the opportunity you have created. Everyone knows that you have appointed these new ministers. Why don't you get them in here one by one and tell them that they have three months to deliver a programme in their area of responsibility that is going to make a difference to people's lives? Most will fail to do so. Sack them! It will be a powerful signal



Nepali Times 28 April-3 May 2005 with cover image by Ajay Joshi of jubilant protesters after street demonstrations sidelined king Gyanendra, paving the way for a ceasefire and restoration of democracy.

# Common man is thinking!"



(above), and Gyanendra addressing the nation via Nepal Television on 1 February 2005 after his coup.



post could be fully stocked with medicine and manned with trained people. This is something I could help to lead for you as I know it would have strong international backing. At last, people would know that you mean business."

As I warmed to the theme, I could see no sign of the king having any enthusiasm for the idea, and I quickly disengaged as it dawned on me, as it had clearly dawned on the king, that the reason for the deficiencies in health posts was to prevent any Maoist combatant from gaining access to any medical support, and if this meant people suffering, so be it.

The subject of the Maoist insurgency inevitably came up, and I took the opportunity to elaborate on what is written in the final four paragraphs of the article above. I advised King Gyanendra that, self-evidently, since there were three parties in the conflict—him, the Maoists, and the political parties—it was imperative that he form an alliance with one of them, preferably the political parties; otherwise, he would find himself isolated, as the other two parties would inevitably, at some stage, form their own alliance.

However, it quickly became apparent that the king's mind was on a totally different track.

On the Maoists, he told me that he had channels open to them, but he was scathing about the political party leaders. He made it clear that they would be waiting for a very long time before he gave any power back to them, and that is a polite way of expressing the actual words he used, but "crawling through the door" is a phrase which has stuck in my mind.

As the conversation developed, it became ever clearer that King Gyanendra had decided to go it alone, relying on the misleading assurances he was constantly receiving from the army, and no doubt his close advisers, that the Maoists could and would be quickly

defeated militarily, and taken out of the equation. This would obviate the need for him to do any deal with the political parties.

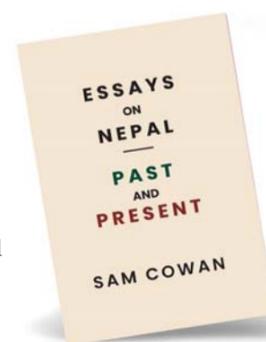
Thus, the way would be clear for him to establish a version of his father's Panchayat system, under a constitution that would be granted to the people by him, their sovereign, as his father and brother had done in 1962 and 1990. As in those constitutions, ultimate power would have remained in the sovereign's hands. This proposed direction of travel was very clear from what the king said to me.

In sum, King Gyanendra was motivated by a desire to emulate his immediate predecessors by granting his people a constitution that would restore his father's Panchayat system in a modern form and give him a central role in decision-making. What was particularly dispiriting was that beyond this single objective he had no plan worthy of the name, nor demonstrably did he have the people with the skills to implement an appropriate plan even if one had existed. Crucially and depressingly, there was little or no indication from the king that he realised that such a course of action could put Nepal's monarchy into serious jeopardy, as indeed proved to be the case. ❏

of your strong intent to deliver real change."

I can express the opening of our conversation in this way because just about every word is still etched in my mind. The king's response to my last quoted words was to challenge me to give an example of something that could be delivered quickly. I can give a verbatim record of what I said in response to this unexpected challenge:

"Health posts, Your Majesty, there is no shortage of them throughout the country as building them has been one of the sources of local corruption, but very few have any medicine to issue at present or have skilled people to assess and meet medical needs. Your Majesty, children are dying for lack of a few pills. Given the right priority, over a period, say of six months, every health



*Essays on Nepal: Past and Present* by Sam Cowan  
First Edition by Himal Books, 2018  
Republished April 2025 by FinePrint  
Available on Amazon



## King Twice

Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah has been king twice. In 1950 he was enthroned briefly as a child king (far, left) by the Rana Prime Minister Mohan Shumsher when his grandfather King Tribhuvan, fled to exile in India. In 2001 he was crowned king again after the massacre in the royal palace in which his brother King Birendra and nine other members of his family were killed by Crown Prince Dipendra.

During his second reign, Gyanendra gradually asserted power by sacking Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in 2002, and then taking full control after the 1 February 2005 coup. He was sidelined after the ceasefire in April 2006, and became a commoner after the Constituent Assembly finally abolished the monarchy in 2008. In the past year, Gyanendra has tried to exploit public dissatisfaction to back a movement for the restoration of the monarchy.

## EVENTS

**Runway Experience**

Presented by Prive Nepal, this event blends fashion, live music, violin and piano acts, and a DJ after party. Deepak Bajracharya & The Rhythm Band, Midnight Riders, and DJ Abhi will perform.

25 April, 7pm onwards, Ticket: Rs 1,000, Prive Nepal, Soaltee

**Stand-up comedy**

Enjoy stand-up comedy by Saddam Miya, Satish Karki, and Rajneesh Aryal as they bring you fresh jokes and unfiltered fun. As a ticket holder, enjoy 20% off the food menu at JamPauroti.

3 May, 5pm onwards, Ticket: 300, JamPauroti Food & Drinks, Baneshwar

**Let's Talk Art**

Join the Let's Talk Art series with Dr Ayesha Fuentes, an expert in conservation and material history, as she delves into conservation ethics, care practices, and knowledge exchange in archaeological and ethnographic collections.

26 April, 3-4pm, Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel

**Chitra Katha**

Immerse in Bhaktapur's vibrant contemporary art scene at this dynamic exhibition featuring works by over twenty Nepali artists. Review on page 9. 11am to 5pm (Sunday-Friday) / 12pm-5pm (Saturday), Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited

**Kids Art Workshop**

Let your little ones explore their creativity, learn new techniques, and create their own masterpiece through art. Call for details.

26 April, 12:45-2:45pm, Sushma Art Gallery, Kathmandu, 9851015531

## DINING

**Mother's Day @ Aloft**

Take your mom out for a dining experience at Nook, which is offering an exclusive 20% off on food and drinks, valid only for Mother's Day on 27 April.

Nook at Aloft Kathmandu Thamel, 9801976071

## MUSIC

**Basecamp Music Festival**

Dance for a cause at Basecamp Music Festival featuring Amax. All proceeds from this celebration of music will go towards starting a music room at Children and Youth First.

25 April, 7pm onwards, Tickets: Rs500, Moksh, Jhamsikhel

**International Jazz Day**

Kaleidoscope Music Academy is celebrating 41 years of musical excellence with budding talents and acclaimed guest artists like Hari Maharjan, Dev Rana, Sunil Upreti. See them perform next week.

30 April, 11am-4pm, Pension Vasana Guest House

**Carole Alston**

Carole Alston is bringing jazz, gospel, and musical theatre in a powerful live performance for KatJazz 2025. Don't miss the opportunity to see her onstage.

25 April, 7:30 pm onwards, Dhokaima Cafe

**Durgesh Thapa**

Watch Durgesh Thapa live as he performs his greatest hits next week at Hyatt.

1 May, 4pm onwards, Tickets: Rs 500 onwards, Hyatt Ground, Boudha

**Rockheads**

The Rockheads are set to show magic with their blend of rock and modern sound for the Kritipur Music Fest 2025.

10 May, Tickets: Rs500 onwards, Palifal Bristo

**Sesame Bakery & Coffee**

Offering a array of artisanal breads, rich mousse cakes, and delicate macarons, Sesame Bakery serves quality desserts in a cosy ambiance, making it ideal for catching up with friends over a cup of coffee.

Bakhundol, 9860554396

**Mamagoto Nepal**

Enjoy Maki rolls, satays, dumplings, and ramen with a side of cocktails at this Pan-Asian restaurant serving a variety of Asian fusion dishes.

Panipokhari (01)4446299

## GETAWAY

**Mystic Mountain**

Perched atop the serene hills of Nagarkot, Hotel Mystic Mountain offers an escape where one can stay in spacious rooms with private balconies and panoramic Himalayan views, and indulge in amenities including their infinity pool, spa, and jacuzzi.

Nagarkot (01) 5913205

**Marriott Kathmandu**

With Marriott Kathmandu, there is no need to venture beyond the valley for a five-star deluxe hotel experience. Enjoy the luxury amenities of this global brand and dine at their Thamel Kitchen, Edamame or Raksi Music Bar.

Naxal (01) 5970300

**Meraki Wellness Retreat**

This boutique sanctuary offers an escape from Kathmandu's bustle by blending modern comfort with nature's embrace. Enjoy their full-service spa offering hydrotherapy, ayurvedic treatments, and yoga classes or unwind in their sauna and steam room.

Budhanilkantha, 9801919001

**Jal Mahal**

Take a dip in Jal Mahal's infinity deep pool, family splash pool, or kids' pool this summer. This family-friendly resort provides top-notch amenities, and warm hospitality.

Gharipatan, Pokhara, 9856087030

**Grand Norling**

Experience a calm and relaxing stay at Norling with their spacious bedrooms, a large balcony with sights of the golf course and their expansive garden.

Gokarna (01) 4910296

**Grill Durbar**

Experience a wide variety of flavors at Grill Durbar with their signature grilled meats and platters or get a taste of authentic Arabic food with their Kabsa rice.

Jawlakhel, 9849777410

**En Space**

En Space is a garden cafe offering a fusion of Italian, Indian, Asian, and Nepali flavors. With dogs ready to greet you at their doorsteps, it is a space to connect and unwind with loved ones food.

Maharajgunj, 980-8009556

## WEEKEND WEATHER



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
30° 13°	30° 12°	28° 13°	27° 13°	26° 13°

**Sunny and Hot**

The heat is building up in the Indo-Gangetic plains and the Tarai which are in the grip of avasat high pressure area. Temperature is hitting 42°C in Delhi and 40 in Dhangadi this weekend. Kathmandu's maximum temperature will go up to 30 and maybe even 32 in the urban heat bubble. There is some residual moisture and transpiration that will mean some buildup over the mountains, but not much by way of rain or snow. Early next week may see the arrival of a weak system that could trigger some isolated precipitation.

## OUR PICK



In Dan Erickson's acclaimed sci-fi psychological tv series Severance, employees at the biotech corporation Lumon Industries have undergone a medical procedure called 'severance' which ensures that they retain no memories of their lives outside while they are at their workplace, and have no recollection of their job once they clock out. As a result, all employees at the company have personalities: the 'innie', who exists solely within Lumon, and the 'outie', for their personal lives. The series follows employee Mark Scout—who encounters a co-worker as an outie—and their journey to discover the truth about their jobs. Stars Adam Scott, Zach Cherry, Britt Lower, Christopher Walken, Patricia Arquette, and more.

## MISS MOTI ESCAPES

KRIPA JOSHI

## MISS MOTI AND THE BEDSHEET



## सामाजिक सञ्जाल प्रयोगमा सचेतता अपनाऔं

- सामाजिक सञ्जालमा अपरिचित व्यक्तिको साथी बन्ने अनुरोधलाई विश्वस्त भएर मात्र प्रतिक्रिया जनाऔं ।
- अपरिचित व्यक्तिलाई जथाभावी साथी बन्न अनुरोध नपठाऔं ।
- सामाजिक सञ्जाल तथा अन्य विद्युतीय माध्यमबाट चिह्ना पुरस्कार जस्ता आर्थिक प्रलोभनका प्रस्तावको भरमा नपरोँ ।
- आफूले प्रवाह गरेका सन्देश वा सूचनाबाट समाजमा पर्नसक्ने नकारात्मक प्रभावको ख्याल गरौं ।
- आफ्नो सन्देशले कुनै व्यक्ति वा अन्य कुनै समुदायको आत्मसम्मानमा चोट नपुऱ्याऔं ।



नेपाल सरकार  
विज्ञापन बोर्ड

# Between the sacred and everyday

A new exhibition on Bhaktapur is a meditation on heritage, belief, and identity

## ■ Sangya Lamsal

**B**haktapur is all about ritual, resistance, and remembrance. Now a new generation of artists is exploring the city of devotees through art.

Balkrishna Banmala was a child deity dancer who performed sacred tantric rituals. But what many saw as divine honour for Banmala was a time stolen from his childhood.

He is now an artist and his canvases (pictured, extreme right) are part of the Chitra Katha exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery. The paintings blur the line between the sacred and the everyday: a masked deity riding a bicycle, a divine child licking an ice cream cone. Some of the images have sparked outrage in his own community.

“When I first exhibited these works, community leaders saw them as betrayal,” adds Banmala. “Some even tore up my paintings. A police complaint was filed. But I believe art must speak the truth even when it is uncomfortable.”

Incorporating circular motifs inspired by the Navadurga Jatra, Banmala weaves cosmological cycles into his paintings, saying, “In the cycle of life: Brahma creates, Vishnu sustains, and Shiva destroys. My work reflects this cycle—today, tomorrow, and beyond.”

For Banmala, art has become a form of therapy, a step to healing the inherited burdens of tradition. “Children in my community continue to be worshipped at the cost of their dreams. I want them to have what I didn’t. My art is my



protest, my hope, and my prayer.”

Altogether, 28 artists from Bhaktapur are exhibiting their works at Siddhartha with everyday stories of the city in the form of paintings, drawings, ceramics, printmaking, light installations. Many works use local materials like terracotta, wood and cement, grounding their expressions both literally and metaphorically in Bhaktapur’s soil.

Narayan Bohaju’s diptych *Floating Hopes II* offers a dreamlike view of urban chaos. Public vehicles float like lotus leaves. The visual texture almost resembles Studio Ghibli, and invites onlookers to romanticise

even the most distressing reality, thereby offering some hope even in unexpected places. In *Echoes of Childhood Community* (pictured above, left), Bohaju returns to Bhaktapur’s spiritual core. A towering temple-like chariot teems with figures in communion: local vendors, families, fruit baskets, religious icons—anchoring a city where the sacred and mundane coexist. Meanwhile, Pooja Duwal’s series *Custodians of the Ephemeral* celebrates the beauty in the ordinary. Rendered in oil, her scenes capture fleeting moments of men in dhaka topi, elders sipping tea, neighbours chatting at street corners. Her remarkable works



showcase unremarkable everyday scenes.

Reminiscing Memories by Srijan Ulak uses pen and ink to trace the fading outlines of Bhaktapur’s architecture and ancestral homes. His detailed work speaks to nostalgia, and the slow erosion that came with urbanisation and concrete. For artist Anjila Manandhar, power comes from turning personal struggles into sacred strength. Her artwork often features skulls and divine figures but they represent her, she tells us. “The heads and skulls I draw are like those of Chamunda or Kali. But I gave that power to myself. I made myself the goddess strong, playful, and defiant. It’s how I motivate myself and heal.”

Manandhar’s works explore identity through surreal metaphors. One recurring image is of an ant with a human face. “Ants are

everywhere. Tiny, sensitive, stepped on without notice. In many ways, humans are the same. We keep moving, but we rarely look down. Maybe if we did, we’d be more grounded.”

The exhibition also features Suraj Shilpakar, a master woodcarver deeply rooted in his family’s artisanal legacy. He also explores modern themes through painting, printmaking, and ceramics. His *Baja Gaja* series is a standout at the exhibition, a sculptural tribute to the role of music in cultural preservation. The piece is built in the tudal style. The struts represent support.

He says, “It honours how youth and women uphold traditions through music. Today, music isn’t just a celebration, it holds culture together.” The work is a reminder that tradition can evolve, adapt, and inspire, while keeping its essence.

Each piece at the Chitra Katha exhibition is a meditation on heritage, belief, and identity. Bhaktapur’s artists offer their intimate stories, inviting onlookers to find personal resonance within the folds of collective memory. They are building new ways for future generations to remember their lives. 🇳🇵

*Chitra Katha*  
Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited  
Until 11 May  
Sunday to Friday 11AM-5PM, Saturdays 12-5PM

## MIND BLOWING POWER. BREATHTAKING TORQUE.

Toyota FORTUNER can help you find your next adventure



TOYOTA



*Move your world*



SCAN HERE

# Returnees prosper together



**DIASPORA  
DIARIES 64-65**

Nine Nepalis, with a collective 147 years abroad, partner up in the hospitality sector back home

These are the 64<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> episodes of *Diaspora Diaries*, a Nepali Times series in collaboration with Migration Lab.

**Tirtha Raj Katuwal**  
(19 years in UAE/Qatar)

We spent our youth overseas, and the trend to migrate for work continues. But Nepali youth are not thinking carefully about where they are going, why they are going. They are just going.

They often get cheated. They do not invest in developing the skills that could help them overseas. When you do not have credible skills, you are forced to adjust to



conditions that are not ideal.

I had to first work in a supplier company too. Only after spending time in the UAE did I understand the labour market, and learn that I could apply for jobs overseas online. That is how I landed my second stint in a luxury property.

Now in Nepal, our vision for starting Chef's Burger and Chef's Hospitality and Party Venue is to contribute to the country, by developing a skilled youth workforce in the hospitality sector, whether for the domestic or the international labour market. We also want to change the perception that Nepalis are competitive only in low paid jobs, as there are Nepalis excelling in the hospitality sector overseas when given the platform.

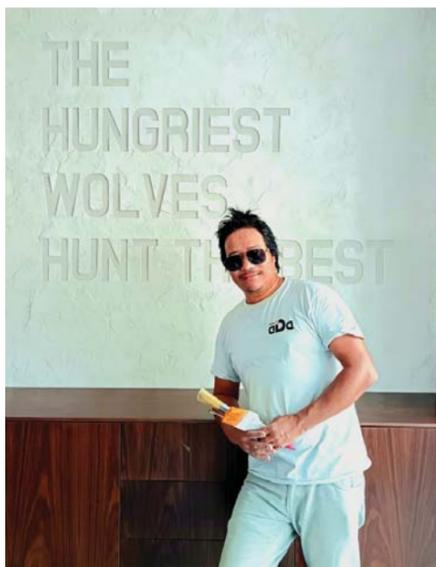
To return or not indeed is a difficult decision for those of us working overseas. It takes years to start earning a decent salary. I started at AED850 and got it up to AED15,000 (\$4,000). To give that up is not easy, of course.

But the situation in Nepal politically is so bleak that you keep postponing homecoming. You wait for things to improve, but they never do. We were lucky as we were well-positioned financially to start our business but not everyone is in that position. They may have the skills and experience but not the money to start something on their own. Their skills and experience are going to waste, which is a big loss for the country. The government needs to do something about that.



# The world of a working artist

Nepali goes overseas to pursue his passion for art



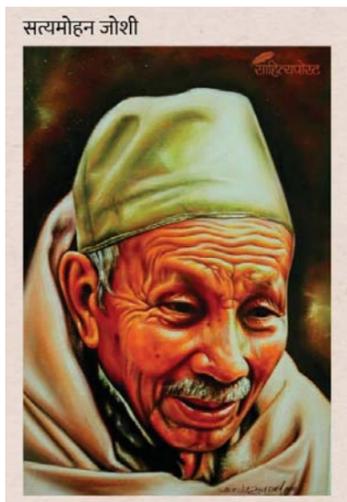
■ **Jeevit Khadka Magar**

Right from my childhood, it seemed like I was lost in my own world. I was not interested in studying, I never paid attention in class and was completely disconnected from what the teacher was saying.

I was not into farming or chores, which used to make my parents angry. Instead, I would scribble on the walls using clay and our mud-thatch house was covered with my amateur art. There was no electricity and I used to draw all night in the light of an oil lamp.

My parents used to be irritated, but they started understanding my obsession with art. With time, my drawings started improving. A turning point was when I drew my grandfather's sketch. It brought a smile to his face.

I overheard him talking to my father and other elders, saying the drawing was very realistic. That was very encouraging. But in class, teachers would punish



me for not paying attention -- except my principal, who is now in his 70s, and encouraged me to participate in district-wide competitions. While I never did, the acknowledgement uplifted me.

After Grade 7 I had to switch schools to one that was two hours away. My craft improved, and the science teacher was impressed with my artwork. By Grade 10, I was getting recognised for my art and would even be paid, for example by the school, to paint its signboard and drawings.

My uncle's son told me it would be a good idea to go to Lucknow to pursue my

passion for art. There in India, I was exposed to diverse talent. My cousin had seen something in me, and we even started an Art Shop, which was a great learning experience.

After Lucknow, I went to Chitwan to work at an art gallery under Prakash Thapa, a renowned artist who became my mentor. I used to watch his work closely as an employee and followed instructions, but I still lacked in-depth knowledge since I did not have any formal training.

He advised me to go to Kathmandu and join Lalit Kala campus. I had the hunger to learn, but the campus did not take a student who had not passed SLC.



So I went back to school, and was embarrassed that my former classmate was now my teacher. But I did not let that hurt my pride.

Unlike my childhood days as a weak student, this time I had a newfound purpose as a student. I passed, and I used to go to Lalit Kala Campus in the mornings and work during the days.

One day, a friend offered me a job in Saudi Arabia where I could get paid to do art. Lucknow, Chitwan, Kathmandu—I had switched lanes, but now I had finally found a clear path that offered more stability and allowed me to focus on art.

Starting in 2006, I worked in Saudi Arabia at an art gallery for

## Mahendra Tamang (15 years in UAE)

If you get hired at luxury properties like Jumeirah, you are considered set for life. I got to work closely with two Michelin star chefs and learnt so much from them in a short time. When I changed jobs, I was quickly promoted to a senior position.

I got to cook for celebrities like Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan and David Beckham. Once you train for a few years as a chef in that position, the world opens up to you. My peers moved to Australia and Europe. My heart, however, was always in Nepal.

My current partners and I worked in Jumeirah and all we talked about as we ate Nepali food on our days off was: नेपाला गएर के गर्ने? During visits home, we would try out different restaurants to understand where we could add value. And we found so many gaps in the market: in food, quality of service, hygiene, employee management, that we had the confidence to believe that we could be the best in Nepal if we joined forces. All of us are from different backgrounds: hotel management, accounting, administration and cheffing.

Leaving behind a monthly salary of AED11,500, plus bonuses and incentives, was not easy. I had started out with a salary of AED1,200. But how long can a person stay away?

The chef life is busy and if I put in the same level of effort in Nepal, I

would be an employer and not just an employee. Being in Nepal would also allow us to think about more than just ourselves.

I had reached a phase in life when I was looking for more than just financial security. My life's missions and what gave me satisfaction was changing, and Nepal was my calling. I came home with one of my partners, Suraj Tamang, to open up our first branch of Chefs Burger while most of our other partners were still in the UAE.

While I went back to the UAE, I cannot describe the joy we felt when Suraj sent us videos from Nepal as customers came into the outlet. I forwarded the video to my friends in Korea, like Basanta, to convince him to invest and work with us. After a year or so, we were ready to start our second outlet, and Tirtha and I returned from the UAE for good.

There is a misconception in Nepal that partnerships don't work. That discourages many returnees from joining forces, which limits how much you can achieve. We busted that myth. By working collectively, we were able to draw on each other's strengths and pool our finances. It has worked well for us.

Even Jumeirah, the property we worked in, has at least 38 main shareholders. Big companies and growth require working together. Now we continue to dream of bigger expansion plans, and of eventually establishing a world-class resort.



## Basanta Simkhada (14 years in South Korea)

My partners are mostly from the UAE but I was working in manufacturing in Korea. One of my partners and I have experience running two restaurants in Thamel. We figured it was not going to be profitable to continue working in Nepal given the Maoist insurgency and the general uncertainty, so

we decided to migrate. He went to the UAE and I went to Korea. At some point, we reconnected online and decided we should try another joint venture. Even though my background was in the hospitality sector, I was working in manufacturing in Korea in a plastic factory. I still learnt quite a lot about the value of hard work and time management.

Incidentally, my Korean employer had spent nine years in

Saudi Arabia before returning to Korea to start his business. He was always very clear about his message to us: working in Korea is temporary and we should go back to our home countries and contribute, just like he did. And that is exactly what we are doing. We are reaping the benefits of our hard work overseas, and providing employment to more than 120 Nepali youths.

ten years. I used to draw large paintings that were kept in Saudi mansions and even palaces. I also painted ceilings, walls, even swimming pools.

Taking up art professionally in Saudi Arabia also introduced me to the works of global artists like Van Gogh and Picasso and helped me grow. But as an artist, I had to create my own identity, give my work my personal touch.

At first, we copy the works of the great masters but as we mature, we start adding our own individuality. This is perhaps the journey of all creators, including singers who start by covering the songs of the greats.

After a decade in Saudi Arabia, I returned to Nepal in 2017, but I did not find what I was looking for. And the money here also did not allow me to fulfil my duty as a father. After two years, I migrated to Dubai to work as an interior decorative artist.

While I have painted art that hangs on the walls of some of the most luxurious palaces in the Middle East, I come from humble beginnings in Nepal.

I had started out painting on clay walls of my home with brushes made from the tail hair of cows. Those art pieces I made on the walls of my house are now just etched in my memory.

I had struggled in Saudi to get wider recognition as an artist but in Dubai, it was different. I started making portraits of famous Nepali personalities during my free time. These sketches, such as my picture of the late Satya Mohan Joshi, got wide attention on social media. This was another turning point.

Art draws me. I am hungry for art. When we are hungry, we find food no matter what. It is the same with art. When you have a

hunger to create, you will create no matter what.

In Saudi Arabia, I used to paint all night before going for my full time job in the morning. You never get tired, you are always encouraged and focused. Your creations will fuel you, make you content. And the more you enjoy it, the more excellence and depth there is in your work.

But other than art, I am also interested in music and literature. Perhaps it is in my genes as both my parents were into music and they used to sing during community events in the village. As children, we used to write songs and sing them during cultural events.

From songs, I started dabbling into poetry. Just the way I learnt art through noted artists, I also tried to learn from great poets like Bhupi Sherchan and Laxmi Prasad Devkota. I have published two books of poems, and my third one, Dhago, will be released this June in Darjeeling by Buk Ant.

When I retire from my life overseas, I want to dedicate my time to more art and literature. All my life, I have created for others as per their preferences, although I take a lot of ownership of the work I do.

But in Nepal, I want to start my own art gallery and create art based on my own interests and passions. All of us have our own priorities in life. Some are driven by money, others by community service. People often ask me why I do not have property in Kathmandu despite spending so many years overseas. I have never hankered for material goods. I enjoy art and literature and want to get lost in it.

Just like when I was a boy, I am lost in my own world. 🇳🇵

vianet





१०० Mbps

वार्षिक रु ८,५०० कर सहित साथै

१ महिना FREE

 Dual Band राउटर सहित

 Mesh को साथ घर भरि WIFI

 viaTV २००+ टयानलको मनोरंजन

For more details:

०१५९७०६४४



# Fromage, vin et charcuterie Népalais

A Frenchman's life-long love affair with Kathmandu

■ Sonia Awale

“It's Kathmandu.”

Just as the family was sitting down for one of its extended lunches, that jubilant cry was from François Driard's grandfather announcing the next posting for his diplomat parents.

Driard (pictured) was 18 in the summer of 1996, a bit of a hippie already, and his life was about to change forever with the magical word “Kathmandu”.

“I was awed with that information from my grandfather, nothing else mattered... In France in the 1990s, Kathmandu had a mythical aura,” Driard recalls.

He came to Kathmandu for Christmas that year to visit his stepfather, the French Ambassador Michel Lummaux. It was to be the first of many visits during school holidays, before he decided to permanently settle down in Nepal.

“Kathmandu, and Nepal, were very different then, it was magical, I liked the nature, the people, civilisation, temples, trees,” says Driard, who explored the country sitting on the top of buses. “Visitors talk about the crazy urbanisation, traffic jams today, and all that is true. But Kathmandu has not lost its soul.”

After his stepfather's tenure in Nepal ended, Driard worked as a business reporter for international publications but decided he did not want to be anyone's employee anymore. In 2007 he landed in Kathmandu with €20,000 in savings to invest.



He knew a few crucial things about himself: he liked food and nature, which is very much tied up with his upbringing--full of lively conversations during lunch and dinner at the family table between abundant cheese, wine and cigars.

So he decided it would be cheese, and registered Himalayan French Cheese and went to the French Alps for a month to learn how to make Tomme de Savoie.

“Cheese making is such an ancient craft and so I thought I won't need much money or studying which I hated and indeed, if you have a tamako bhado and fire you are set,” explains Driard. But

Nepal's temperature and humidity were not ideal, even at higher altitudes. The first customers for his cheese were the Hyatt Regency and Nina and Hager. But he needed to create a market for cheese in a country which only knew hard churpi in the north and soft paneer in the south.

He started selling his cheeses at the Summit Hotel weekend market, expanding to his own 1905 Farmer's Market which later moved to Le Sherpa in Maharajganj, where it is now, and also a market at Labim Mall in Pulchok.

He had cow dairies in Nuwakot and Dhulikhel, and finally a



yak cheese unit at 3,379m in Ramechhap. It was the yak blue cheese from here that went on to win a Gold Medal in France, putting Nepal's French cheese on the world map.

“People come and try our cheese at the market, they ask questions. There is a lot of education to be done about cheese,” adds Driard, who also has three cheese shops in the Valley.

Driard now makes 25 types of cheese. The products are being noticed and every year he has French students coming to Nepal to learn the art of yak cheese making.

“In France, one family or company makes one kind of cheese for generations. In that I'm very unique as a cheese artisan,” he says. “The students come in to learn but I tell them to also teach us something too, add another cheese to my collection.”

Being a foodie, Driard is now also dabbling in meat with his

own charcuterie with bacon, ham, sausage and pâtés. All of this is now served at his Emilio's Pizza, a leafy hideaway in Lazimpat. His South Side in Moksh is probably the smallest wine bar in the world.

“I call the process sublime,” says Driard of his ventures, which have grown organically. “You need the same temperature and humidity of 12°C and 80% for cheese, meat and wine.”

Emilio's speciality is the eight-cheese pizza (which has eight types of cheeses), and a pizza with bhutan topping (not the country but fried intestines and organs Nepali-style). He has opened a small branch at Courtyard in Pokhara.

With two artisanal cheese units, two farmers' markets, a meat processing unit, a bakery, and wine bar he now wants to own his own vineyard someday so he can add Nepali wine to his repertoire. Another future plan is to start up an agri-tourism business where customers can drink, eat and work in peace.

In the past 20 years in Nepal, Driard has not always succeeded in his ventures but this hasn't curbed his enthusiasm. He is learning as he goes, and like an old wine, Nepal is growing on him. Its slowness suits his French art de vivre with eating slowly outdoors, having conversation, importing less.

“I have proven that with even a little money you can do a lot of things in Nepal,” adds Driard. “In the West, they easily invest half a million euros on a cheese factory, I make good cheese with 10 times less.”

TATA ev

TATA

Curvv.ev  
suv coupé



top variant price  
Rs. 56.99 Lakhs

SIPRADI TRADING PVT. LTD.

THAPATHALI – 01 5350643, 9802333164 | RADHE RADHE – 01 5914771, 9802333160



SIPRADI