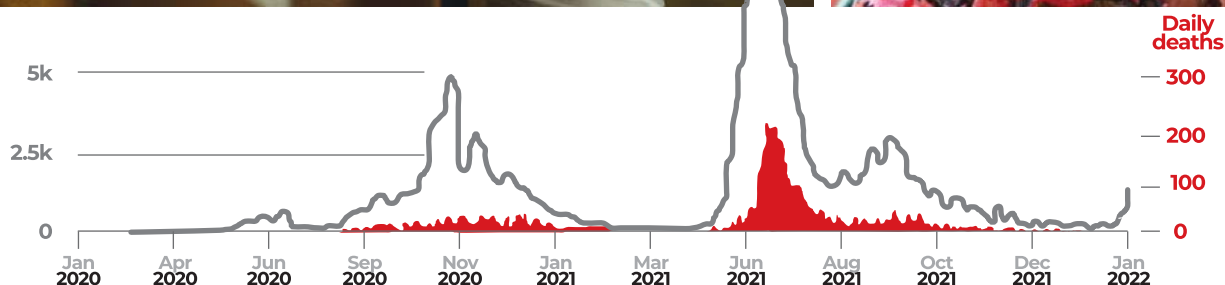


PHOTO: AMIT MACHAMAS



3rd wave in 2 years

Nepal is entering its third Covid-19 wave, and our best defence against Omicron is to vaccinate, mask up and avoid crowds

- **Sonia Awale**

It was on 23 January 2020 that the first Covid-19 case was detected in Nepal. Two years later, the country is on the cusp of a third wave.

The time to sound an alarm about a new surge is long over. Action should have been taken months ago. All the government can do now is to launch a massive campaign to inoculate the unvaccinated, offer boosters to frontline workers, the elderly, and people in densely populated areas.

Evidence elsewhere, including in neighbouring India, show that while the Omicron strain is 12 times more transmissible than previous variants, most of those infected do not need critical care in hospitals – unless unvaccinated or immuno-compromised.

Cases are rising fast in Nepal, doubling every 2 days to 3,075 new recorded infections on Wednesday. The positivity rate has soared 10 times in a week to 23.5%. At this rate, there will be 12,000 new confirmed cases by 16 January, which will be higher than the peak of the second wave in May 2021.

“With Omicron now spreading in the community, we don’t need to gene sequence anymore,” says Epidemiology and Disease Control Division director Krishna Prasad Paudel.

He is hoping Omicron will show a similar trajectory to elsewhere, and those infected will have milder symptoms compared to Delta. The new variant mostly impacts the upper respiratory tract, with lungs largely unaffected, hence lessening the need for oxygen and ventilators.

However, Nepal's low vaccination rate (50% partially, 40% fully) means that individuals need to continue taking precautions with masks and distancing.

A double dose of the vaccine is not as effective against Omicron, and most Nepalis have passed six months since they were inoculated, meaning that their antibody levels have fallen considerably by now. Boosters would provide more protection, but the government is only offering those to high risk groups from next week.

Although Omicron is now the dominant strain, Delta is still circulating, and causing deaths. We know from the past two years that it takes a few weeks for mortality to

pick up after cases start rising. This has been seen in India, and Nepal closely follows health trends there.

“We need to keep a close watch on our mortality figures, find out which variant is causing most deaths, and we will have to prepare hospitals and healthcare workers once again,” warns epidemiologist Lhamo Yangchen Sherpa of IPAS.

Across Nepal, many rural hospitals are still understaffed and do not have trained personnel to operate ventilators and run ICU wards. Not all new oxygen plants are functional yet.

But Sangeeta Kaushal Mishra of the Health Coordination Division assures that the government is in a better position this time: "We are prepared for hospitalisations if cases are milder, but we don't know how the virus will behave."

The sheer transmissibility of Omicron could mean severe symptoms and even deaths among the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions like diabetes. Elsewhere in the world, even vaccinated health workers have been infected, overwhelming hospitals.

The first line of defence against Covid is still masks and distancing. The second is mass vaccination. Nepal still has a stockpile of over 10 million doses in refrigerated stores across Nepal, and 6 million more doses in the pipeline. A syringe shortage reduced the vaccination rate, but Mishra expects the drive to pick up next week. More than 200,000 people were vaccinated on Wednesday.


"We were lucky Omicron is mild, but we should use this opportunity to inoculate both the unvaccinated and boost the vulnerable on war footing," says physician Buddha Basnyat of Patan Academy of Health Sciences.

The government is starting mass inoculation of children from 12-17 years, and has shut down schools for three weeks until 29 January due to the new surge. Gatherings of more than 25 people have been banned, masks are mandatory outdoors, and people will need vaccine cards to enter public spaces from next week.

“The fact that Omicron is much milder has made people even more careless, so we must once again reinforce the importance of masks, ventilation and distancing,” warns virologist Sher Bahadur Pun at Teku Hospital.

2 Equally important is the institutional isolation of active cases and contact tracing. Experts believe official figures are under-reported and total cases and fatality figures are much higher.

The Economist tracks 'excess deaths' across countries and estimates that 2.3 million people had died from Covid-19 by May 2021 in India, compared to only 200,000 official fatalities.

Its calculations show that when Nepal recorded its highest daily Covid deaths of 246 on 19 May 2021, the actual number was 425. The real infection rate was also much higher than official data. 

Lessons still not learnt

EDITORIAL

PAGE 2

HEALTH AT HOME
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Lessons still not learnt

Earthquakes are inevitable in Nepal. It is not a question of 'if', but 'when'. And 'when' was 2:28AM on 15 January 1934. It was 11:56AM on 25 April, 2015. Another memorable and tragic date in future is certain.

But Nepalis have short memories. As long as aftershocks shook us, we were reminded about the horrors. But seven years after 2015, the fear has evaporated.

This is not panic-mongering, or crying wolf. It is reality: every part of the central Himalaya is hit by a megaquake above 8 magnitude every 500 years or so, and a moderate intensity quake every 100 years.

The 2015 disaster was not a Big One, 1934 was. Nonetheless, both released some of the built-up tectonic tension underneath us. What worries Himalayan seismologists is that there has been no major earthquake in western Nepal in the last 500 years. The rock strata beneath are stretched to breaking point.

Experts tell us that if an 8M earthquake strikes in this seismic gap between Pokhara and Dadeldhura, it will also rock Kathmandu and be even more damaging than 2015.

That 7.8M earthquake seven years ago was comparable to the 7.7M quake in Gujarat in 2001, and the 7.6M temblor in 2005 in Kashmir. In 2015, Nepal saw greater physical damage, but India and Pakistan had much higher casualties. One reason was that we were lucky 25 April 2015 was a Saturday, and students were not in classrooms.

To mark National Earthquake Safety Day on 15 January, we recap the past seven years. There is some good news: over 80% of reconstruction is complete. Nepal's recovery has been smoother than other developing countries hit by mega disasters.

Despite initial delays due to political muddles and the Blockade, reconstruction in most sectors picked up in 2016. Today, only health facilities and heritage sites are lagging at about 65% completion. Most rebuilt homes follow national seismic resistance guidelines because masons were trained, and there was monitoring before grants were released in installments.

However, reconstruction in Kathmandu and other towns have not even passed the 60% mark, and could take another five years. The Rs300,000 reconstruction grant was just not enough for families to rebuild urban homes. More worrisome is that whatever has been rebuilt in Kathmandu Valley mostly flout building codes and permits.

The Gongabu neighbourhood saw 160 deaths in 2015, most of them were crushed under illegally built concrete structures. Most of those high rises have been rebuilt using the same faulty techniques.

Except in Gongabu, most concrete structures survived the 2015 quake in Kathmandu. This has reinforced public misconception that cement houses, regardless of how they are built, are stronger than brick and mortar ones.

However, seismologists say that if the tremors in 2015 were only a few seconds longer and the magnitude slightly higher, many of Kathmandu's concrete buildings would have also collapsed. They are unlikely to be spared in the next big one.

Seven years after the earthquake, it is back to business as usual. In fact, Kathmandu is now more dangerous because it is even more densely packed, and there are more multi-storey blocks. Clearly, awareness about earthquakes has not translated into safer construction — we have forgotten that earthquakes do not kill people, poorly built structures do.

Surya Narayan Shrestha at the National Society for Earthquake Technology – Nepal (NSET) tells us that building codes need to be strictly enforced with stringent monitoring mechanisms. Municipalities must be stricter with building permits.

Next, masons and concrete moulding workers need skills upgrading in earthquake resistant building technology. Security personnel now need training in search and rescue under collapsed concrete structures.

Shrestha says schools, hospitals and public buildings need to be retrofitted urgently. Many schools NSET had helped retrofit withstood the 2015 earthquake, and this model needs to be replicated across western Nepal.

Nepal's towns are losing open spaces, which are vital as shelters in the aftermath of future earthquakes. Kathmandu must protect remaining open spaces (*see pages 6-7*), and these efforts need to be scaled up not just for earthquake safety but also to restore the city's lungs.

Preparedness will mean life or death for all Nepalis, not just for those in the seismic gap in the western part of the country. This should be the main message on the National Earthquake Safety Day.

Earthquakes are beyond our control, but we can make ourselves safer when they happen.

Sonia Awale



BIKRAM RAIN/NEPALI TIMES ARCHIVE

On National Earthquake Safety Day on 15 January, let us remember that the 2015 quake taught us to be better prepared.

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

On shaky ground



This week we mark the 24th National Earthquake Safety Day on 15 January, which commemorates the 8.3M megaquake of 1934. Since we started publishing Nepali Times 21 years ago we have been marking the day with reports on earthquake safety and preparedness.

This week we publish another reminder from 20

years ago from issue #76 11-17 January 2002. Back then we looked at the 2001 Gujarat earthquake and how Nepal would fare in a disaster of a similar scale.

Since then, Nepal was hit by the 2015 Gorkha quake, but it was not the big earthquake, nor the megaquake that is long overdue in western Nepal. And if we add the fact that Nepal has urbanised rapidly over the last two decades, we must urgently expand preparedness all over the country. More in this earthquake safety special issue.

Excerpt:

As one more Earthquake Safety Day approaches, it looks as if we are still likely to be caught unprepared.

- Records going as far back as 1255 CE show that Nepal has experienced nine major earthquakes over the last 700 years.
- Recurring earthquakes in the 20th century claimed more than 23,000 lives.
- The Great Bihar earthquake of 1934 - which could as well have been called The Great Kathmandu Earthquake - measured 8.3-8.4 on the Richter scale, claimed 8,500 lives and destroyed 20 percent of the Valley's buildings, including a large number of temples and monuments.
- In 1988, a magnitude 6.6 earthquake hit eastern Nepal, with the epicenter in Udayapur. More than 700 people were killed, 6,500 were injured and 22,000 houses collapsed.

The Kathmandu Valley Earthquake Risk Management Project (KVERMP) estimates that an earthquake today similar in magnitude to the 1934 Mahabukampa, centred in the densely populated Kathmandu Valley, would likely cause more deaths and casualties than last year's Gujarat earthquake in India.

In hard numbers, they count something like approximately 40,000 dead and 95,000 injured. More than 60 percent of the existing buildings would be destroyed leaving 600,000 to 900,000 residents homeless.

From archives material of *Nepali Times* of the past 20 years, site search: www.nepalitimes.com

ONLINE PACKAGES



The 1934 earthquake destroyed many historical monuments in Kathmandu Valley. While the Rana rulers of the time were commended for fast-paced rebuilding, many of these sites lost their original form. Take a tour with Rohit Ranjitkar of KVPT and find out what changed in Patan Darbar Square following the 1934 reconstruction. Watch the video and read story: *pages 10-11*.

DIESEL VEHICLES

Motorised vehicles are way too inefficient in urban areas in Nepal ('Nepal must scrap old diesel vehicles', Ranjit Devraj, nepalitimes.com). Cycling does not cause pollution nor does it lead to traffic jams. I hope more Nepali people will pick up cycling.

Martin Max Aart de Jong

- I left Nepal in 2006 after working there for many years because of air pollution. As soon as I returned to my homeland, which values clean air, my respiratory problems improved. I long ago stopped believing your country will ever do anything to fix the pollution problem. Don't even get me started on the destruction of green spaces in Kathmandu.

Margaret Kerr

- You can't change unless you're going to challenge vehicles importers and syndicates who are on par with ministers and powerful states here.

Ngawang Tenzin

- The quality of petrol and diesel has to be strictly monitored and improved upon immediately. A mass transit system has to be implemented ASAP.

Sunil Sakya

- It is far more complex than replacing diesel trucks and buses with electric models. It requires massive investments on the part of vehicle purchasers, plus huge investments to produce renewable electricity needed to replace the diesel, plus charging stations and the transmission infrastructure as well as training technicians to service the new vehicles. So while the idea of electrifying transportation is laudable, it is clearly impossible to achieve unless there is a serious change in how decisions are made and how climate policies are financed.

Tim Maker

STOLEN GODS

Whether or not a Nepali stole it, it is not a licence for any other country to steal it ('Who looted Nepal's gods?', Ashish Dhakal, #1093). It is a great shame that the so-called more developed countries are doing it. Same with foreign countries interfering in domestic affairs, especially if they are violent or motivated by greed.

Gerald Fernando Heng

- I really dislike it when people tell me that are our gods are better protected abroad in museums and in the homes of private collectors.

Seetashma Thapa

- These objects do not belong in museums. But perhaps poverty made people sell them.

Renate Schwarz

- Sad indeed, greed is the motivating factor.

Gyurme Dondup

KATHMANDU AIR

People want to carry on with their current lifestyles, even if it means they and others will suffer as a result ('Breathing can kill you', Sonia Awale, #1092).

Dave Peterson

HUMBLE BRAGGING

Social media has made people more insecure and insincere and our lives are now unfortunately filled with lies ('Boasting while pretending not to', Anjana Rajbhandary, nepalitimes.com).

Bhumi Limbu

- So this is what youngsters are upto. I'm at an age where I'm more annoyed by the new stop sign than someone being disingenuous about him/herself. Lol.

Ram Chamling

ELECTORAL REFORM

What accountability ('Clean up elections to clean up politics', Shristi Karki, #1093)? In a democracy, if a party loses an election, its leader makes way for the next in line with better ideas. In our country, such losers stick to their chair till death do them part. Cremate their chairs with them.

Lal Bahadur

REINHOLD MESSNER

Nepal could have achieved more from such an amazing ambassadors for mountaineering and tourism (What next for Reinhold Messner?, Kunda Dixit, #1092). People like Reinhold Messner need to be celebrated and engaged for sustainable tourism, green economy, prosperity. Let's not also forget Sherpas for their courage and ethics.

Narayan Adhik

- How modest, true praise indeed for Nirmal Purja.

Alan Roadnight

PANAUTI

Let us hope Panauti gets plenty of love from the efforts of good people to counter the urban sprawl ('Creation to destruction, then revival,' Kunda Dixit, *pages 4-5*). It is a very special place.

Daniel Lak

- I really love these articles that *Nepali Times* is doing.

Yonhyaku Nijuu Moyase

Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING



Tri-Chandra's run down state is a microcosm of Nepal

by *Sahina Shrestha*

The country's oldest college is falling apart, an apt symbol of neglect and apathy, even as many of the earthquake-destroyed institutions get rebuilt. Read full story and watch video about Tri-Chandra's past, present and future, on nepalitimes.com

f Most reached and shared on Facebook



Omicron is coming to Nepal, be prepared

by *Ramu Kharel and Ben Ayers*

Last week we warned about an imminent Omicron surge in Nepal. This week we are already in deep with daily new cases doubling every 2-3 days. Follow us on social media platforms for the latest development.

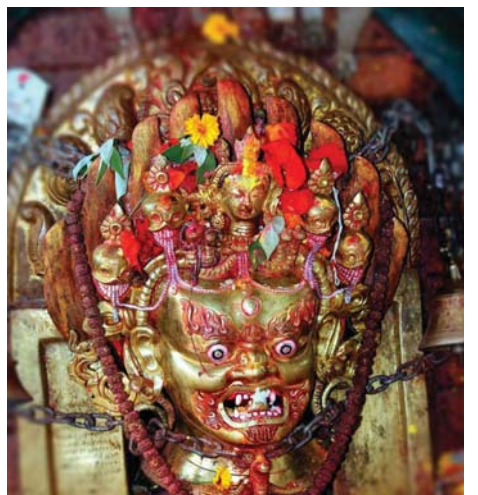
t Most popular on Twitter

'Nepal must scrap old diesel vehicles'

by *Ranjit Devraj*

A new study emphasises the need for Nepal to overhaul its diesel-powered buses and trucks, and revise the country's vehicles mass emission standards, as the air quality rapidly deteriorates. Visit our website for details.

“ ” Most commented



Who looted Nepal's gods?

by *Ashish Dhakal*

Even as Nepal's stolen religious antiquities are being returned by collectors and museums in the West, there has been a slew of thefts of other religious objects from in and around Kathmandu. Is the focus on antiquities in museums in the West detracting from role of Nepalis who stole and sold them? Join the discussion online.

🔍 Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Who Looted Nepal's Gods?
Is the focus on antiquities in museums in the West detracting from role of Nepalis who stole and sold them? Ashish Dhakal (@ashisvki) reports:



Instantly Noodles @AmatyaRishi
An illuminating read. I'd also love to see how Guthi Sansthan's action or lack thereof to protect and safeguard our temples might have created conducive environment for thefts to take place.



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
The Alchemy of Angst
In a world smothered by information but lacking wisdom, anger, born of pain, has become the defining emotion of the cyber age, writes Turkish author @Elif_Safak for @ProSyn.



Prashasti Singh @Prashasti513
"Between numbers 'and numbness' there is more than rhythm and rhyme," writes @Elif_Safak summing up everything that's wrong with today's world and everything we need to do to make it right.



Bilal @mbilal
A brilliant analysis by @Elif_Safak. A must read for everyone in these dystopian times.



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TURKISH AIRLINES

Creation to destruction, then revival

New book documents preservation of Panauti's monuments and intangible heritage as it prepares for Makar Mela

● Kunda Dixit

The town of Panauti is preparing for its once-in-12-years Makar Mela, a festival that dates back 1,000 years. The gathering is now uncertain because of the Omicron surge, but the town 40km east of Kathmandu expects pilgrims from Nepal and India during the month of Magh.

Although it is among the better preserved historic Newa towns, even here the sloping tile roofline is being replaced by flat-top concrete blocks that dwarf the temples and shrines. But the town is preserving its past, not just by restoring its monuments but also reviving its many festivals like the Makar Mela.

The release of the bilingual book *Panauti: Passé – Présent Panauti Past – Present (1976-2020)* is perfectly timed not just for the 12-year festival which starts on 15 January, but also to draw attention to the town's many other festivals.

With French and English text by Gérard Toffin of the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), and illustrated with before and after photographs



by Toffin, the ethnologist Corneille Jest and Panauti-based photographer Prasant Shrestha, the book is a must-have guide to anyone interested in exploring the history of this unique town.

Toffin and Shrestha met in 2010 during the last Makar Mela and were both struck by the changes that



Panauti was undergoing, mostly for the worse, and decided to make a photographic documentation before it was too late.

'This book is a testimony to the mutations in Panauti,' writes Toffin. 'It gives a real importance to photography, aims at highlighting the local cultural heritage and

how the current uncontrolled urbanisation threatens it.'

For Shrestha, it was a matter of using his profession to further the cause of the preservation of his hometown, and this passion shows in the meticulous care he has taken in the repeat photography of shrines and landscapes.

Just as the German government undertook to restore Bhaktapur as a coronation gift to King Birendra, the French chose the out-of-the-way town of Panauti. Legend has it, Panauti was given by the king of Bhaktapur as dowry to his newly-married sister.

Panauti is located in the sacred

prabhu BANK

BO₂ + Fusemachines

New York-based AI company Fusemachines and Business Oxygen (BO₂) signed a \$1 million in FDI agreement to foster local tech companies. Sameer Maskey of Fusemachines said the investment would help its AI education initiative in Nepal. "Fusemachines has contributed to AI education and employment generation in Nepal, and we are excited to support its project," said Siddhant Raj Pandey, chairman and CEO of BO₂.



Tata sales

Tata Motors is now the second largest car seller in India, just behind Hyundai. In 2021, it sold an all-time-high 331,000 units, of which 22,555 were electric cars. Most of its sales are of its recent 'New forever' models.

THAI Smile Agent

Society International Travel Services has been named THAI Smile Airways General Sales Agent for Nepal and will be responsible for marketing, sales, customer support and airport operational services. The airline will replace Thai International's flights between Bangkok and Kathmandu in mid-2022.



Nepal Wood Expo

Nepal's Media Space Solutions and Indian Futurex Trade Fair and Events organised the 7th Nepal Wood International Expo 2022 and Nepal International Furniture & Home Décor Expo 2022 at Bhrikuti Mandap this week. The expo hosted more than 100 local and international furniture brands.

India tech conclave

The Indian Embassy is organising its 3rd International Entrepreneurship Conclave on 5 February in Kathmandu. The event will follow India@75 Ideathon from 27-29 January aimed at finding tech-enabled solutions for challenges in cross-border commerce, agriculture marketplace, urban development and governance with awards for winning teams.



Global IME Kisan Card

Global IME Bank has partnered with R&D Innovative solution and Diktel Rupakot Majhuwagdi municipality to provide subsidy loans through the Global IME Kisan Card, using which farmers can buy fertilisers, crop seeds and pesticides at a subsidised rate. Interest will be charged based on the government's agriculture and livestock loan regulations.

Nepal growth 3.9%

The World Bank in its recent Global Economic Prospects Report has predicted that Nepal's economy will grow at 3.9% in the current fiscal year despite the pandemic. The Bank's forecast is unchanged from last year, its optimism based on growing vaccine coverage and reports that the rice crop damage was not as bad as reported. The report predicted that South Asia's growth would rebound to 7.6% in 2022.



CCTVs for artefacts

Everest Bank donated Rs100,000 to the Bhaktapur CCTV Installation committee to set up cameras in inner streets to protect the town's artefacts given the recent rise in thefts in Nepal.

Nabil for farmers

Nabil Bank will support Krishi Karja Mela taking place at Chitwan Expo Centre from 19-22 January. The bank will hold discussion between farmers, financial institutions and local governments on agro-financing issues like applying for loans, banking processes, and policy and regulating gaps.



HRM Nepal Awards

The HRM Nepal 2021 Awards on Corporate Excellence and Distinguished services was held this week to encourage social and economic contributors. The individuals and organisations in the fields of hospitality, agribusiness, health, start-up and insurance were recognised at the event.



NMB AGM

NMB Bank in its 26th Annual General Meeting announced that it has recorded a net profit of Rs2.71 billion, Rs166.45 billion in deposits and Rs158.04 billion in loans. The meeting approved the distribution of 12.5% bonus shares and a 3.3% cash dividend on the current paid-up capital of the bank.



tri-junction of the Punyamati, Lilawati (Rosi Khola) and the mythical underground river, Rudrawati – a miniature replica of the holy confluence of the Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati at Prayag in India. Panauti's Tribeni was so revered that it was among the sources from which holy water was poured into the Rani Pokhari by Pratap Malla in 1669.

Panauti was first settled in the early Kirat period 1,500 years ago. It escaped being conquered by Prithvi Narayan Shah, and was annexed when Bhaktapur fell in 1769.

The town was on an ancient trade route to the Tarai, and with its Indreswar Mahadev, Bhadrakali and Unmatta Bhairav shrines it is predominantly Hindu. However, there are Buddhist influences as well.

Panauti was the scene of a battle during the insurgency in 2006, and suffered damage in the 2015 earthquake. But now, its glorious past is threatened by modernisation, which is why this book by Toffin and Shrestha is so important.

The Makar Mela itself is a celebration of Panauti's proud heritage during which there is a vigil for the king of the serpents, Vasuki Nag.

Other examples of revival are the Devi Pyakhan masked dance which used to be performed in the past to ward off cholera, and the Jya Punhi full moon festival which is only celebrated here. And in 2015, Panauti also reinstated its own Kumari Living Goddess tradition.

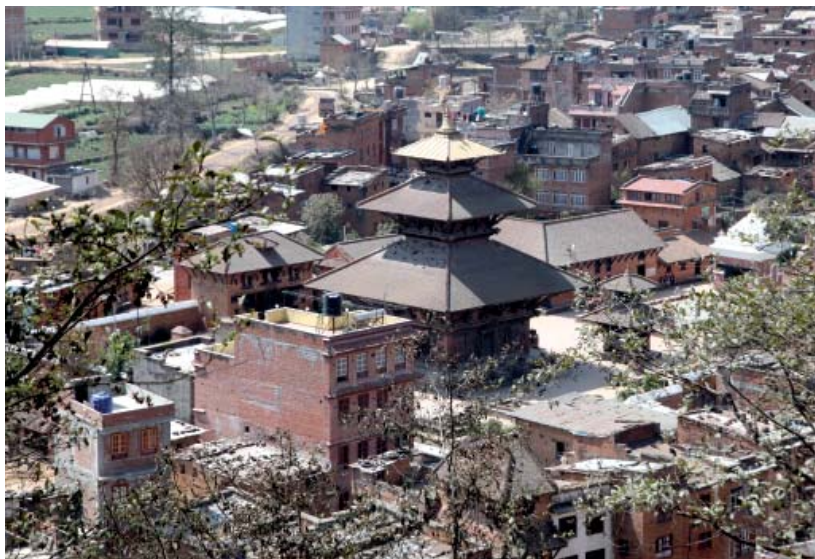
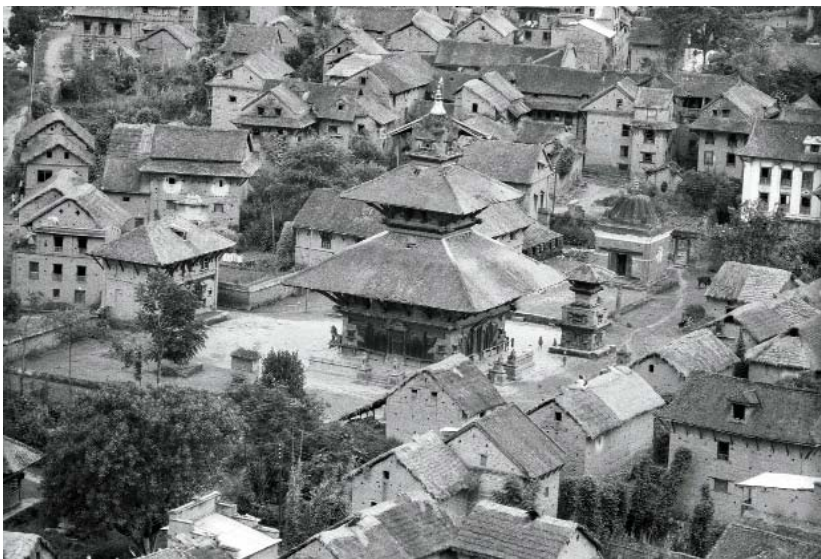
The book reprints a scroll dating back to 1635 that depicts the sacred Tribeni confluence which we learn is now in the Virginia Museum of Fine Art in the United States.

Under federalism, Panauti became a municipality that includes some of the surrounding villages. Mayor Bhim Neupane was elected in 2017, and says the mela may need to be scaled back due to Omicron restrictions. 🇳🇵



nepalitimes.com

More pictures from the book online



Panauti: Passé - Présent Panauti Past - Present (1976-2020)
Text: Gérard Toffin
Photos: Prasanti Shrestha
Ambassade de France Népal and Alliance Française, 2021
ISBN 978-9937-0-8212-9
114 pages

HOLY GROUND: Panauti's roofline has changed, but the surrounding hills have more forest (*above*). All photos by Gerard Toffin in 1971-76 and Prasanti Shrestha in 2011-2020. The sacred confluence of the Punyamati and Lilawati rivers in Panauti where the 12-year mela will be held this month (*above, far left*). Indreswar Mahadev Temple in the centre of Panauti in photographs taken 40 years apart (*above, right*).



Ancient past, anxious future

Artist SC Suman's exhibition looks at contemporary Nepal through Mithila lens

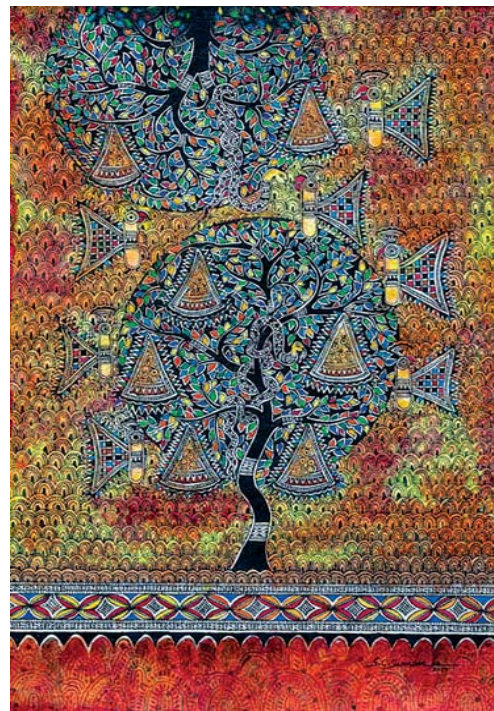
a liminal deity, his brush looks both ways – at the ancient past and the anxious future – as the artist seeks to explore the tales of creation and analyse the effects of the Covid pandemic in a finesse of colours and intricate lines.

The Cycles of Time is first and foremost a story seeking balance, where the paintings are replete with familiar images of nature and Hindu deities. Snakes coil around branches as fish swim below. Vishnu and Laxmi sit atop the Seshnag as Brahma looks from above. Deer frolic behind leaves and kites take to the textured sky as gods and their creations try to co-exist in the great cosmic sphere.

The wide expressive eyes and delicate lattice-like linework flow, curve and bend at ambivalent angles to lead the viewer in the odyssey of Suman's inspiration which begins at the footsteps of creation itself (*Male female union and creation*) and charts the progression of life through the four *yug*.

"As an artist I wonder about how we got to this state," says Suman. "And to answer this, I turn to look at where we used to be before."

The cyclical four *yug* in Hindu cosmology – *Satya Yug*, *Treta Yug*, *Dwapar Yug* and *Kali Yug* – are described not just as passages of time but also of human morality and physical states, and SC Suman creates his own interpretations through a swirl of colours and iconography. A warm golden hue is overwhelmed by cooler blue from one age to the next, harmony giving way to disorder.



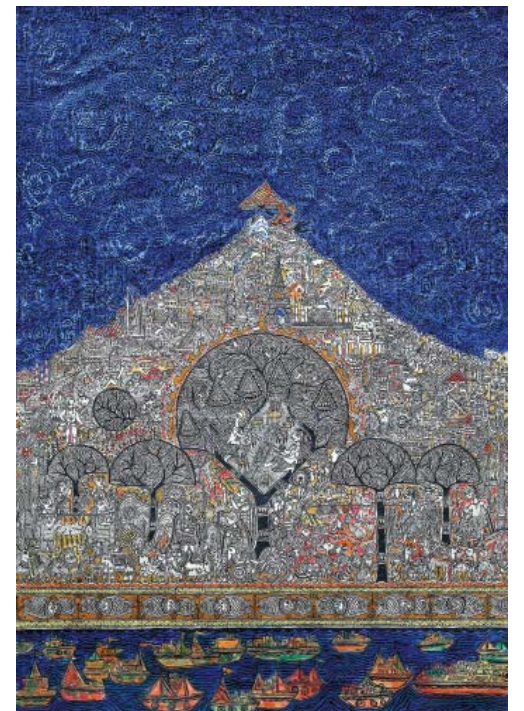
By the time we come to the *Kali Yug* (*pictured above, right*), big fish gobble up little ones as nature is decimated indiscriminately, and houses, people and cars try to climb on top of each other. Elsewhere, bats are scapegoated for the pandemic and oxygen cylinders hanging by parachutes try to make up for deforestation.

When he was a child in Lahan, SC Suman recalls, the East-West highway was just being built and forests were cut to make room for the bitumen roads.

"We would see sap coming from the cut trees, they were bleeding," he recalls.

But not all is dark and foreboding. Progress and possibility for change is offered by the vibrant *Ecological Balance in Nature* (*pictured above, left*) and *Love Rasa in Nature* that call for stability and love that makes all things beautiful.

Dashami Mela and *Chhath Puja* are joyous panoramas that capture life, environment and the divine. Meanwhile,



subtle sensuality and eroticism permeate *Kobhar Painting* and *Naturally Intoxicated for Each Other* in expressions of unity in duality.

Mithila Cosmos: The Cycles of Time is a uniquely introspective meditation on flux and the Anthropocene that asks the important question: What's next?

Any sense of nihilism is nullified by an underlying wheel of eternal return, while these powerful images reflect the intrinsic human proclivity to love, care and aspiration – offering us a second look at ourselves.

Perhaps we ourselves are the redeemers we seek to help us through the dark times. 🇳🇵

Mithila Cosmos: The Cycles of Time
Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited
Till 15 January
11:00am – 5:00pm

A special Dhruvad vocal recitation with Vishal Bhattarai, Anish Kumar Jha and Mitesh Tanudkar will take place on 14th January, 4pm-5pm, to a limited audience of 15 persons. Please contact the Gallery for details.

● Ashish Dhakal

SC Suman's 18th solo exhibition *Mithila Cosmos: The Cycles of Time* is the sixth in a series that juxtaposes traditional form and aesthetics with contemporary issues in Nepal. Suman was the first Mithila artist to do a solo exhibition of this traditional artform of Nepal's Madhes in 1991, and was recently awarded the International Lifetime Achievement Award by the 2021 Madhubani Literature Festival held at Darbhanga in India's Bihar state.

"An artist is a social creature," he tells us, "informed by the time and place around them."

Indeed, since 2007, Suman has depicted the aftermath of the Maoist insurgency, the promulgation of the new Constitution, and the 2015 earthquake in detailed paintings rooted in Mithila traditions and style.

His latest exhibition is equally timely. Like

Mini forests to make Kathmandu more liveable

A new reforestation method that gives a hopeful new twist to the term 'urban jungle'



● **Sonia Awale**

Imagine living next to a tiny forest the size of a tennis court right in the middle of Kathmandu, which makes the whole neighbourhood look clean and green. The forest is dense and layered with several different species of indigenous trees, shrubs, fruits and herbs. And

butterflies, bees and birds return to the vibrant ecosystem.

This is not fantasy, but an actual possibility for an over-urbanised city where there are very few open spaces left.

First developed 40 years ago by a Japanese botanist, the 'Miyawaki

method' of reforesting allows densely packed, carefully selected trees to grow in tiny plots of land in urban centres like Kathmandu, or even in household backyards.

The result is a self-sustaining forest rich in biodiversity in a few short years that can serve as a

Nepali artist's bu

● **Kunda Dixit**

Milan Rai has come a long way since his project to stick white butterflies to trees in Nepal went viral worldwide. His art has now morphed into activism to save Kathmandu's open spaces.

The self-taught school dropout sees this as a natural evolution of his art, and a reflection of the urgency to do something about congestion and urban decay.

"People ask me why I stopped painting. I haven't. My canvas is now measured in acres of open spaces," says the 38-year-old artist. "I am no longer limited to the visual, my art is now immersive, so people can smell and taste it, touch the soil wherein worms and insects dwell. They can be struck by lightning, they have life."

Rai's art is a subterfuge to save what is left of Kathmandu Valley's last remaining open spaces. This has brought him face-to-face with dysfunctional politicians, municipality officials, contractors and neighbourhoods that do not value greenery.

That makes Rai's urban canvas subversive. He says, "This is political art, land art, it has to hit people at an emotional level to act."

After spending his childhood in Hong Kong with his Gurkha soldier father, Milan Rai returned a misfit to school in Bhojpur. He was expelled twice, and got into bad company. After a serious gangfight, he found solace in art.

He entered a painting competition in India and came first, and held his first solo exhibition at Park Gallery in Lalitpur. He started painting

Milan Rai's career evolves from art to activism in trying to save Kathmandu's open spaces

in earnest, but something was missing.

The epiphany came one morning when a butterfly alighted on his paintbrush. It led Rai to his 'Butterfly Project' to pin white paper cutouts of butterflies on trees, lampposts all over Kathmandu.

They were a symbol of harmony, and went viral. In a real-life demonstration of 'the butterfly effect,' little white wings started appearing on London's red double decker buses, pinned to trees on Greek islands, at Harvard University. The Nepali artist was invited all over the world for lectures and to demonstrate his installation art.





PHOTOS: MITHILA WILDLIFE TRUST

network of new lungs for a polluted city. In Dhanusa district, the Mithila Wildlife Trust has become the first to successfully implement the Miyawaki method in Nepal. “These are high density forests which act as natural air conditioners, and they can bring

down the ambient temperature by 2-3°C. And the ecosystem is so diverse that it also allows plants, insects and birds to thrive,” says Dev Narayan Mandal (*pictured, above*) of the Trust. Mithila Wildlife Trust last month planted trees in 2,580



square feet of land in Janakpur using this technique, and there are already calls from forestry offices in Mahottari and Makwanpur who want to implement the technique in their districts. “I even got calls from a few individuals in Kathmandu who want to use the method in their compounds,” says a visibly-enthused Mandal, a recent recipient of the International Environment Warrior and World Neem Warrior awards. Unlike traditional reforestation where trees of the same species are planted in bulk at a distance of 3-4m, Miyawaki prioritises native varieties and those most suitable to the specific climate of the area. The saplings are also planted together at a distance of 60cm from each other. This means the trees are densely packed, and quickly grow into forests that serve as oxygen generators for cities with dirty air. They also help revive indigenous plants, and since the canopy is multi-layered, it means the trees do not all mature at once. Mandal says the forests can grow 10 times faster and are at least 20 times more diverse and 30 times denser than traditionally replanted

forests. But the real attraction is that they do not need large tracts of land, but can grow in small plots only 30m x 30m in city cores. Nepal is an international model for a successful community forestry program that saw the country’s tree cover double in the last 25 years to nearly 40%, but in the cities the greenery has been replaced by concrete jungles. Trees have been cut to make way for hard, dry surfaces like roads, sidewalks, pavement, buildings and parking lots, all of which absorb and retain heat in ‘urban heat islands’. And when residents rely on air conditioners to cool their homes, it becomes a vicious cycle as the outside temperature goes up even more. What little is left of public land in Kathmandu and other major cities are being built over. Communities rallying to turn open spaces into leafy parks are opposed by municipalities whose idea of a park is to have fountains, concrete pavements and shops. Mandal sees immense possibilities for Kathmandu to recreate his pilot plot in Janakpur: “It can be replicated along the Bagmati, and other empty spaces.

Government offices and corporate compounds can also use the Miyawaki model.” Following Mithila Wildlife Trust’s Miyawaki experiment in Janakpur, the team is preparing another 100mx100m abandoned plot nearby to plant with 30 types of native plants. After the initial investment to source saplings, fertilise the soil with compost and cow dung, the forest grows to be maintenance-free within two years. “In the long term, the Miyawaki method is more cost effective because it results in high yield layered forest as well as revive indigenous plants at the time of climate crisis with 100% survival rate,” says Mandal. The solution to air pollution, solid waste disposal and shrinking open spaces lies in urban reforestation, which in turn can beautify and clean up our cities. A simple cost-effective technology, the Mikawaki method needs support from communities and local governments – both of which Dev Narayan Mandal has garnered in Janakpur. He says, “The best thing about Miyawaki is that it can turn urban wastelands quickly into lush forests.” 🇳🇵

Butterfly effect



“Butterflies brought me close to trees, and I was communicating with them, only to find out that scientists now know trees can actually communicate with each other,” says Rai. The very first tree in Kathmandu on which he had pinned butterflies was chopped down to make way for a road widening scheme, and this prompted Rai to use art to save Kathmandu’s greenery. “I realised that the definition of art had to be expanded, it cannot just be a canvas or an installation. Art is not just a craft, it has to be something that provokes the viewer into action,” he explains. As Kathmandu’s air pollution got worse, Rai donned a military issue gas mask and stood in the middle of traffic at the city’s main intersections, broom in hand. He visited municipality offices wearing that mask, using social media to expose government inaction. That brought Rai face-to-face with official apathy and neglect at the root of Kathmandu’s sorry state. By now he was familiar with the ins and outs of the municipalities, and set up the non-

profit Vriksha Foundation for his activism. He tried to work with Kathmandu’s mayor to rescue the Tin Kune triangle, only to find that it was not just the government that could thwart action, but also the local community. After an emotional live Facebook post in which he wept in frustration, Rai gave up on Kathmandu mayor Bidya Sundar Shakya, and turned to Lalitpur’s Chiribabu Maharjan who was more receptive. Even so, there were hurdles every step of the way from contractors and officialdom. His plan to green an open space at Jawalakhel intersection was rejected in favour of a sterile cement wasteland with concrete structures and an ugly fountain that does not work. But Rai is currently working to green four other open roadside spaces in the Jawalakhel area with leafy paths and shaded sitting areas. He has made enemies along the way: land mafia eyeing the property and contractors who could not sell cement and steel rods. “This is a tragedy of the commons,” says Rai, who emphasises that he is not happy with the parks he is working on. “These are not my creations, I am just trying to reduce harm. They needed urgent intervention, but my vision for these spaces has not been realised. These parks are not answers, they are questions.” After painting on canvas, sticking butterflies on trees, wearing gas masks in traffic, and trying to rescue open spaces, Rai now realises these approaches are too piecemeal. He adds, “The system is just not just there to have a policy framework to address urban decay. People also need to understand that we do not need more structures, we need to rediscover our primal intimacy with the non-human world.” 🇳🇵

EVENTS



Comedy Show
Get ready to laugh nonstop with Matt Davis and his show 'Not sure when, But then!'. Book tickets at <https://fb.me/e/19rkPZQj>
19 January, 8pm-11pm

Cine Night
Enjoy a weekly movie night over mulled wine and popcorn with fellow cinema lovers every Wednesday. Call for more details
Wednesdays, Bikalpa Art Café, 9851147776

Glocal Village
Be a part of Glocal Village, a modified version of global village where young entrepreneurs share startup ideas and enjoy music and game stalls.
15 January, 2pm-7.30pm, Gyan Mandala

Rabita KISI Exhibition
View artwork by printmaking artist Rabita KISI at the opening of her solo exhibition 'I look back sometimes...'
14 January, 4pm onwards, Gallery Mcube, Chakupat



Clothes drive
Join the Rotaract Club's clothes drive to collect warm clothes for children in need.
14 January, 10am-5pm, Rotary Hall, Thapathali, 9861138784/9843131455

DINING



Bota Momo
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981116403/9802055040

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MUSIC



Fictioners & Try-Tone
Head to Beers N' Cheers this Saturday to enjoy mulled wine and hear Fictioners and Try-Tone live. Call for ticket details.
15 January, 7pm onwards, Beers N' Cheers (01) 5524860

Live Music
Enjoy Nepali tunes with Shadow Shade and Black Mamba, who will be performing live at Azizz resto and rooms.
15 January, 2pm onwards, Azizz Restro



Music Room
Learn to play a new instrument with musicians and educators at the Music Room started by Jazzmandu. Call for more details.
Bhatbhateni, Naxal, 9818856982

Combination at Camida
Have good food at discounted prices with live music from the band Combination at Camida Restro & Bar.
14 January, 5pm-9:30pm, Bouddhadwarmarg



The Elements
Celebrate the start of the weekend with The Elements as they perform live music at Ambience365.
14 January, Ambience365, Pulchowk

GETAWAY

The Old Inn
Located in the picturesque Bandipur, The Old Inn offers a panoramic view of Annapurna range through each of its rooms housed in Newa architecture. Book a room at the cozy bed and breakfast now.
Bandipur, (065) 520110



Temple Tree Resort
Temple Tree, with its traditional Nepali architecture, promises best services, a perfect atmosphere at Lakeside to wind down, comfortable accommodations, and delicious food.
Lakeside, Pokhara (061) 465819


Megghauli Serai
Leave worries behind and spend a few days at this luxurious safari lodge. Overlooking the Rapti River, this lodge not only offers scenic views but accommodation that integrates local culture and art.
Chitwan National Park, 9851218500



Peacock Guest House
Peacock Guest House is housed in a 700-year old UNESCO heritage building. Guests can marvel at Newa architecture and reside at the heart of the old city of Bhaktapur.
Dattatreya Square, Bhaktapur (01) 6611829

Mystic Mountain
The resort situated amidst the forest of Nagarkot offers a peaceful, silent getaway. The ultramodern designs offer guests top notch services and comfort.
Nagarkot (01) 6200646

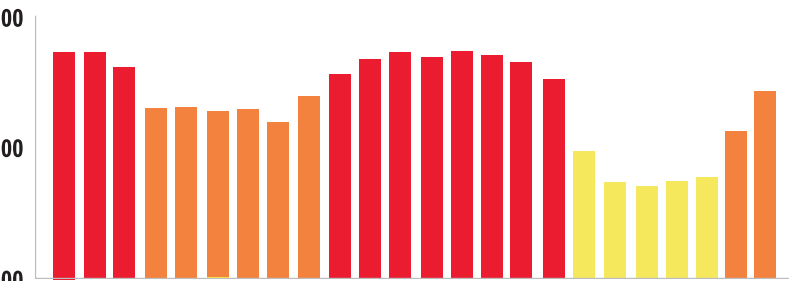
WEEKEND WEATHER



A low pressure system scraped eastern Nepal this week, bringing more snow. The wind direction has changed in its wake, and will bring colder, drier air from the northwest. This will keep temperatures low over the weekend. The high pressure area over northern India also means blue skies, with the wind blowing away cross-border pollution – ideal for a get-away this Saturday-Sunday. The longer term forecast is for some cloud moving through, but not much by way of precipitation.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
16° 3°	17° 4°	17° 5°

AIR QUALITY INDEX



10PAM 12 January to 9AM 13 January measured at US Embassy, Phora Darbar

Falling temperature this weekend will intensify winter inversion in Kathmandu Valley, trapping suspended particulates at surface level. This will make the Air Quality Index (AQI) even worse, especially during the morning and late evenings when traffic emissions and smoke from brick kilns build up. Unfortunately, these will be trapped all night, keeping AQI in the red 'Hazardous' zone. (In graph above, check how the early morning rain lowered pollution temporarily (yellow bars) from 2am-7am.) Afternoon breeze will bring some respite. Keep outdoor activities to a minimum, wear masks to protect against Omicron and pollution.



OUR PICK
This weekend is the perfect time to sit back and catch up on the five seasons of cult-favourite sitcom *Search Party* (2016-2022) which follows the exploits of a group of four recent college-grads in New York as they become involved in the search for a missing young woman, and the events that result from their involvement. Engaging, funny and deliciously dark, *Search Party* is rife with genre-bending social satire and addictive comedy. Each season has a unique theme — from a Nancy Drew-esque echo to Hitchcock's paranoia — as these 20-something millennials look to find and reinvent themselves in the age of fame and media. Stars Alia Shawkat, John Reynolds, John Early and Meredith Hagner, featuring Chelsea Peretti, Jeff Goldblum, Chloe Fineman and Susan Sarandon.

कोरोना लागेपछि
न धुँदा जाने, न रुँदा जाने
त्यसैले कोरोना लाग्नै नदिन
भीडभाडमा नजाने



संयुक्त संसदीय सरकार नेपालको स्वास्थ्य तथा जनसंख्या विभागले जारी गरेको छ

नयाँ बजार, काठमाडौं
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काठमाडौं, काठमाडौं

नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड



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Kathmandu Metropolika

Many of you who were born during or just before the last elections in 2017 will no doubt remember that the Mayor-in-Chief of Kathmandu promised that if he was elected he would turn his Metropolika into a "Smart City".

I am glad to report that as he hits the campaign trail for re-election, he has over-fulfilled his promise with flying colours and has turned Kathmandu into a genuine Smart-Ass City. Indeed, we consider it an honour to have Hizzoner make Kathmandu Great Again by covering the open space at Lainchour with Astroturf®.

Mayor Bidya Sundar is telling

us not to worry about the state of the roads because if he is elected again Kathmandu will have a monorail, a cable car network and a subway system. Whew, that makes me feel much better.

Mayor Sack Ya promised to build all those things 5 years ago, but it is comforting to know he is still working on it. At this rate, 'Mandu Town will not just be smart, it will be an unmitigated genius.

That reminds me, I must take this opportunity to thank the five-time Prime Minister for reacting with lightning speed on a complaint I made through this

column during his last tenure as PM in 1996 to do something about the Godavari road.

The Ass has credibly learnt through a mole in Balu Water that he has instructed the Secretary of the Ministry of Metaphysical Planning and Highway Robbery to instruct the Dept of Rhodes to instruct Pappu Construction to instruct its sub-contractor to order labourers to patch the hole in front of our Thaiba Housing Colony.

Overnight, workers in hard hats covered the pothole in question with garbage and turned it into a speed bump. This is a 100% improvement on last fiscal year when no potholes were filled, and a dramatic illustration that despite all the cynicism, we do have a functioning democracy where accountable leaders

respond to problems citizens face. At this rapid rate, if my calculation serves me right, all potholes in Lalitpur District will be repaired by the dawn of the next millennium.

Meanwhile, the aforementioned Mayor of Kathmandu in cooperation with the Federal Grabberment is multi-tasking to, among other things, turn his city into a highly intelligent organism with these measures:

1. Allow Buttass, Inc to turn Naryanhiti into a Party Palace with a fun park for children and a miniature Disneyland. The palace of the Shah dynasty has all the attributes of a proper banquet venue: royal antecedents, decadent decorations, capacity to hold thousands of guests, and ample parking space.

2. Kathmandu Metropolitan City has deployed smart cows to regulate traffic as well as eat plastic garbage to keep the streets clean and green.
3. Some of you alert drivers will have noticed that Kathmandu now has super-smart traffic lights that tell you how long you have to wait for it to be green. But they have been deliberately turned off to save the Kathmandu Metropolitan Shitty on electricity bills.
4. The Army's #OccupyTundikhel military campaign has been so successful that it has been turned into a training ground for urban warfare.



The Ass



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Archaeological sites holding clues to past earthquakes and the heritage of Kathmandu Valley need protection

● Sahina Shrestha

In late December, a stone slab was discovered near Patan Darbar Square that contained ancient inscriptions.

The *shilapatra* was buried 3m under the Bhimsen Temple, and had two deer facing a Dharma Chakra indicating it to be a Buddhist relic. A team led by epigraphist Shyam Sundar Rajbanshi and archaeologist Prakash Darnal determined it to be 1,400 years old.

"It talks about a *bihar* built by Brish Dev and renovated by Amshuvarma," explains Rajbanshi taking the names of the Lichhavi kings. Darnal also found a wall buried 1.4m further down.

Beneath the soil of Kathmandu Valley are relics of historical settlements dating back at least to the 4th century CE. Sites like the Pashupati area were built as far back as the 3rd century CE, but apathy and ignorance are destroying our past.

"Kathmandu's ground level has risen over time as new structures are built atop the rubble of older ones that have collapsed or been abandoned after earthquakes," explains Rohit Ranjitkar of the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT).

The Pantheon in Rome was built on the site of another structure in 27 BCE, but was destroyed in a fire. The centres of other European cities like Athens and Pompei also have carefully preserved sites for archaeological digs.

On the contrary, Kathmandu does not have similar protected zones. The *dabali* across the Kathmandu Darbar complex has two *chaitya* more than 1m below current ground level. In front of the Kumari Ghar, workers came across the roof of a *chiba* while building a road 15 years ago. It has been encased in metal bars. These digs have also shown how the ground level

has risen in Kathmandu over the centuries after earthquakes.

Ranjitkar says the *dabali* was actually a part of the palace before the 1934 earthquake. The houses there were damaged but instead of repairing them, the palace complex was restructured.

Kathmandu Valley has a history of earthquakes every 60-70 years recorded in inscriptions from 4th century CE onwards, manuscript colophons after 8th century CE, and archives like the *Gopalrajavamsavali*.

These chronicles show a list of earthquakes in 1224, 1255, 1260, 1344, 1408, 1618, 1767, 1823, 1833, 1834, 1869, 1916 and 1934. While accounts of earlier earthquakes are generalised, there are more details available for 1833 and 1934.

After the 1934 earthquake, the Bhandarkhal garden in Patan Darbar was used to deposit debris from destroyed monuments and houses. For years, the rubble lay in a heap beneath the garden.

When KVPT was working to restore the Bhandarkhal pond (right) in Patan Darbar Square in 2009, it discovered that the ground level of the area before the 1934 earthquake was much lower.

"This gave us an idea of the pre-1934 ground level, so we cleared up the entire garden to preserve that," says Ranjitkar. While clearing the debris, KVPT also discovered ancient stone inscriptions currently kept in the Patan Museum garden.

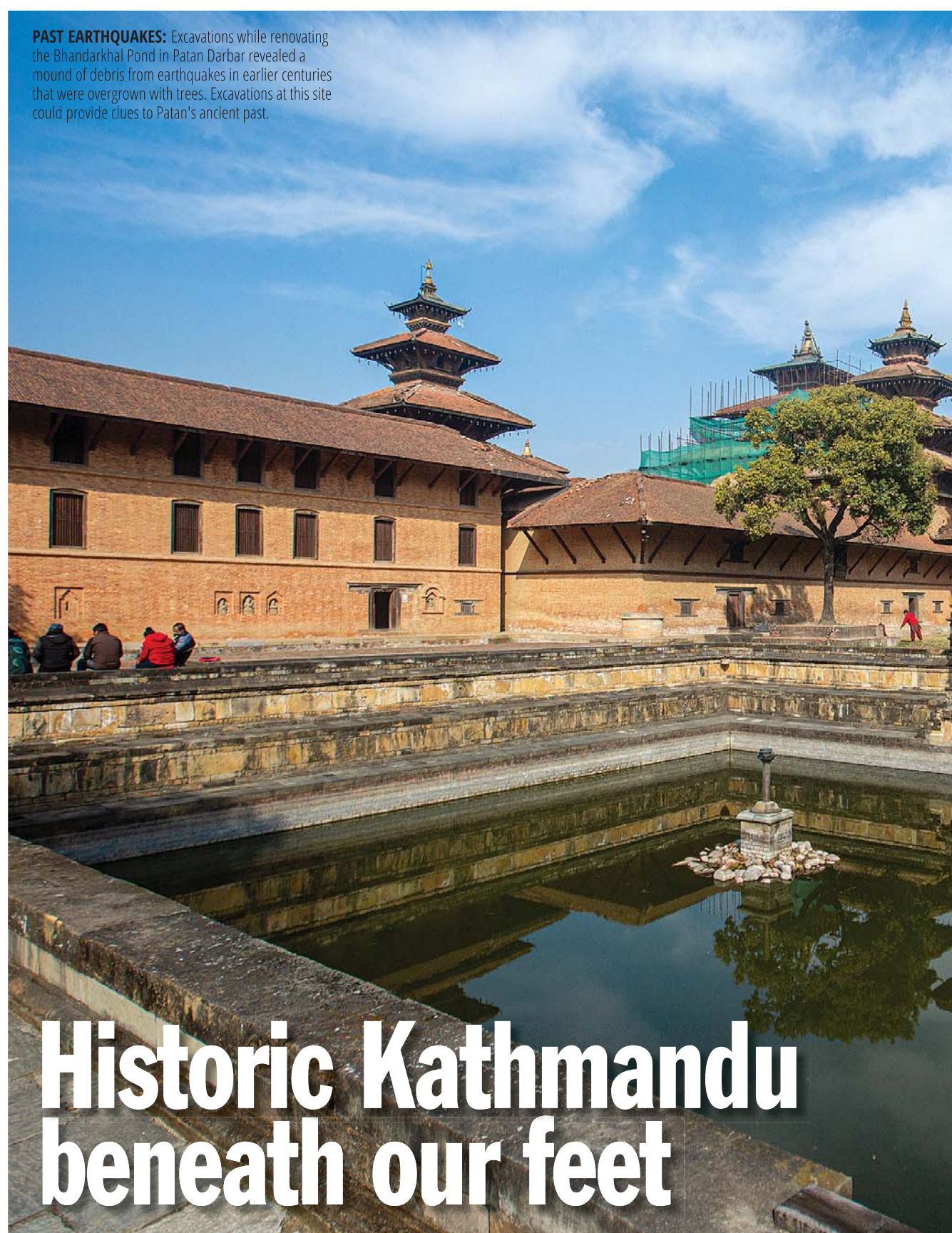
Even after the restoration of the pre-1934 level in Bhandarkhal, more layers were discovered underneath which could contain relics of debris from previous earthquakes. "We discovered how much more there is left to discover about Kathmandu's subsurface heritage," Ranjitkar says.

After the 2015 earthquake, a team from Durham University, UNESCO and the Nepal Government conducted Ground Penetrating Radar Survey and geo-archaeological analysis of the three Darbar Square areas of Kathmandu Valley. It was determined that Kasthamandap which was thought to be a 12th century structure was actually built in the 7th century.

The team also found that in all three palaces the subsurface level had been intruded by modern utilities like water, sewage and electrical cables. The team produced a provisional risk map of all three palace complexes highlighting archeological sites (*see box*).

Also, after the 2015 earthquake, UNESCO and the Department of Archaeology (DoA) also probed the Tashi Golma Stupa in Swayambhu, where inside the stucco stupa, another spire was found with sculptures and terracotta closely resembling those at Mahabouddha in Patan.

Kathmandu's Handigaon was



Historic Kathmandu beneath our feet

the capital of the Lichhavi dynasty, and excavations have found 1,300-year-old terracotta figures and pottery, including inscriptions dating back to King Amshuvarma.

In 1989, an Italian team excavated the Satya Narayan temple in Handigaun which took back the earliest habitation in Kathmandu to the 1st century BCE. Along with other archeological artefacts, a stone conduit dating back to 726 CE in the time of King Priya Varman was discovered. A lifesize stone statue of Jaya Varma was also found in nearby Maligaun with an inscription

from the 2nd century CE.

Conservation architect Sudarshan Raj Tiwari believes that the fabled Kailashkut Bhawan was located in Handigaun. This was Lichhavi King Amshuvarma's palace built in 598 CE, and so big that Chinese monk Xuanzang who visited Kathmandu at the time chronicled that its upper chamber could hold 1,000 people.

"When we were looking for Kailashkut Bhawan, we found traces of archeological deposits inside the Balmamdir complex," recalls Tiwari.

However, Handigaun is being rapidly built up with residential houses and office blocks, and the DoA has not protected the site.

Adds Tiwari: "The first thing that needs to be done is building restrictions in archaeological sites. We have been telling the government this for years but nothing has happened. When we did the ground radar survey, we had to do it from on top of a road."

In 1984, four ancient water conduits were discovered while constructing an underpass at Bhotahiti. One of them facing east

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and had an inscription from 596 CE saying it was constructed during the reign of King Amshuvarma. (Above, right) The other three were from the Malla era. Water was still flowing from the spouts when they were unearthed.

But instead of preserving them, the municipality extracted the stone water spouts to be stored in the National Museum in Chhauni. An underpass that no one uses was built, but water is still seeping out through the concrete.

Bhotahiti was among the seven water spouts in the area, and locals

say it was first buried during the expansion of Tundikhel by the Ranas in the 1880s. Another sunken water spout lies buried under the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) building east of Ratna Park.

Some 80m north from Bhotahiti towards Jamal is another sunken water spout called Jhanga Hiti which was covered over in 1981 after a local football team got permission to build its clubhouse over the historic site.

“History is layered, both metaphorically and literally,” says heritage documentarian and activist

Alok Siddhi Tuladhar. “While it is understandable that things were destroyed during the Rana regime, it is sad that the same happened and continues to happen when we have people’s representatives running the government.”

In 1989, an inscription dating back to the Licchavi era was discovered in Baluwagaun near Gokarna which mentioned the presence of a monastery as well as a village, making it an area of archeological significance.

Archaeologist Prakash Darnal remembers that a house was being



BURIED HISTORY: These 1,500-year-old stone spouts were discovered in 1984 while building an underpass in Bhotahiti. But instead of preserving the site, the city covered it in concrete and moved the spouts to the National Museum.

What is beneath Kathmandu's Darbar Squares?



Archaeological investigations with ground penetrating radar of the three Darbar Squares by UNESCO, Durham University and the Nepal government after the 2015 earthquake classified the World Heritage Site into three zones for protection of subsurface relics of historical significance:

Red 'High Risk' areas contain the most important archaeological remains and are of significance not only to understand the development of the palaces, but also the Kathmandu Valley and beyond. There should be no further development in these areas, and any existing modern structures should wherever possible be removed.

Yellow 'Moderate Risk' areas contain archaeological remains. Development in these areas should be kept to a minimum, in accordance with an Archaeological Watching Brief.



Green 'Low Risk' areas contain minor or no archaeological remains. Development in these areas is possible, but should be undertaken in accordance with an Archaeological Watching Brief.

built over the find, and when the Village Development Committee was asked to stop construction, officials said nothing could be done because it was private property.

Similarly, a stone water conduit was unearthed while digging the foundation of a private house in Hattisar, but that construction also could not be stopped because it was private property.

Heritage experts say public awareness as well as political will is needed to save Kathmandu’s historical sites beneath the ground as much as above the ground.

“We explore and excavate to see if there is anything in the subsurface. But once it is done, it doesn’t mean the job is finished,” says Sudarshan Tiwari. “The reports have to be accessible, and in a language that is understandable by the public. This way people will become more aware about the value of protection.”

“The government then has to implement the recommendations and specify the limitations. Everyone needs to take the conservation of these sites seriously,” he adds. 🇳🇵

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