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

I 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 – unlike unvaccinated or immunocompromised.

Cases are rising fast in Nepal, doubling every 2 days to 3.675 new recorded infections on Wednesday. The positivity rate has soared 19 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 Khishna 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, 46% 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 IFAS.

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

But Segev Pathak, head of the Health Co-ordination Division assures that the government is in a better position this time. “We are prepared for hospitalisations if cases are mild, 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.

Lessons still not learnt

Editor's Note: PAGE 2

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 8 million more doses in the pipeline. A supply 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 seize this opportunity to inoculate both the unvaccinated and boost the vulnerable on war footing,” says physician Bhumtay Banerjee 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 of TUTH Hospital.

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

The Economic Times tracks “sewer deaths” across countries and estimates that 2.3 million people had died from Covid-19 by May 2021 in India, compared to only 265,000 official fatalities. Re-calculation shows that when Nepal recorded its highest daily Covid deaths of 248 on 19 May 2021, the actual number was 426. The real infection rate was also much higher than official data.
On National Earthquake Safety Day on 15 January, let us remember that the 2015 quake taught us to be better prepared.

On shaky ground

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

20 YEARS  AGO

The Earthquake that changed the face of Nepal

On the 15th of January 2005, Nepal was hit by an earthquake that altered the landscape of the country. The earthquake, with a magnitude of 7.6, lasted for approximately one minute and changed the face of Nepal. It was the country’s worst natural disaster, killing more than 13,000 people and injuring over 22,000. It was a wake-up call for Nepal, bringing about a new era of earthquake safety and preparedness.

REMEMBERING RECONSTRUCTION

The 2015 earthquake led to many reconstruction efforts in Kathmandu Valley. While the future looks brighter, the challenges remain. Let us hope that the lessons learned from the 2015 earthquake will help us build a safer and more resilient Nepal.

Earthquake-related reconstruction efforts have been ongoing in the Kathmandu Valley, providing hope for a brighter future. While the road to recovery may be long and challenging, the resilience and determination of the people of Nepal continue to inspire.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Onimono is coming to Nepal, to be prepared by...

A key step in the process of preparing for an earthquake is ensuring that essential services and supplies are readily available. Nepal is currently in the process of preparing for the next earthquake, with various measures in place to ensure that the country is as well-prepared as possible.

Most popular on Twitter

‘Nepal must scrap old diesel vehicles’

In a key step in the process of preparing for an earthquake, the government of Nepal has announced plans to scrap old diesel vehicles.

Why we are doing this...
FLY SAFE
FEEL SECURE

Have a healthy journey with all precautions taken to the finest detail for your in-flight safety.

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 Children’s surge, but the town 60km east of Kathmandu expects pilgrims from Nepal and India during the month of Magh.

Although it is among the better preserved historic Newa towns, there are concerns for its shrinking and shrinking. But the town is preparing for its once-in-12-years festival which starts on 15 January, but also to draw attention to the town’s many other festivals.

With French and English text by Edward Tuffin, of the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), and illustrated with before and after photographs by Tuffin, the ethnologist Cornelle Jett and Panauti-based photographer Prasant Shrestha, the book is a must-have guide to anyone interested in exploring the history of this unique town.

Tuffin 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.

Tuffin, who has a real importance to photography, aims to highlight 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 allows for the melodic care he has taken in the repeat photography of shrines and landscapes.

Prabhu Bank

Nepal growth 3.9%

The World Bank’s latest 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 was unchanged from last year, even as many global economies are expected to see an upturn.

India tech conclave

The Indian embassy is organizing its 10th International Science and Technology Expo (ISTEX) in New Delhi on 5th February. The event will feature India’s best in digital and IT, and will bring together experts from various fields to discuss challenges in cross-border commerce, agriculture markets, urban development and governance with awards for winning teams.

CCTVs for artefacts

The Bank of Nepal has installed CCTV installation committee to set up cameras in each district to protect the country’s artefacts.

Nabil for farmers

Nabil Bank will support farmers for their data-based production plan with an exhibition centre from 13-19 January.

THAI Smile Agent

The Bank of Nepal has announced that it is providing a loan to THAI Smile Agents for conducting various transactions, including sales, customer support and operational support.

Global IME Kisan Card

Global IME Bank has launched the Global IME Kisan Card for farmers, with a 90-day interest-free period and a 1% interest rate for three years.

HRM Nepal Awards

The HRM Nepal Awards were held this week to encourage social and economic contributions. The awards are given to individuals and organisations in the fields of hospitality, agriculture, health, social work and insurance.

NMB AGM

NMB Bank’s 15th Annual General Meeting announced that it had recorded a net profit of Rs.27.31 billion, Rs.13.45 billion in deposits and Rs.13.22 billion in assets. The meeting approved the distribution of 12.24% bonus shares and a 1.3% cash dividend on the current paid-up capital of the bank.
Ancient past, anxious future

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

Ashish Dakal

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 art form 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 the cyclical four yug in Hindu cosmology—Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapara Yuga and Kali Yuga—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.

The Makar Mela itself is a celebration of Pashupati’s proud heritage during which there is a vigat for the king of the serpents. Various Nag.

Other examples of revival are the Devi Pashupati masked dance which used to be performed in the past to ward of cholera, and the Pashupati festival which is only celebrated here. And in 2005, Pashupati also reinstated its own Kumari Living Goddess tradition. The book reprints a scroll dating back to 1630 that depicts the sacred Tribeni confluence which we learn is now considered the birthplace of the Ganges Museum of Fine Art in the United States.

Under federalism, Pashupati became a municipality that includes some of the surrounding villages. Mayor Ritika Neupane was elected in 2017, and says the metals may need to be scaled back due to Omsicio restrictions.

More pictures from the book online.

nepaltimes.com

14 - 20 JANUARY 2022 #1094
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 on 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 brushwork on trees

Kunda Dixit

Milan Rai has come a long way since he first projected 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 population 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 18-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 canvases 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 Bhaktapur. 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 essence, 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, luring ants 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.
square feet of land in Janakpur using this technique, and there are already calls from forestry offices in Mahottari and Makawanpur who want to implement the technique in their districts.

“I even get 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 4-4m, Misuwai 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 gomera 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.

Community raliing to turn open spaces into leafy parks are opposed by municipalities where idea of a park is to have fountains, concrete pavements and shops.

Mandal sees immense possibilities for Kathmandu to recreate its lost greenspace in Janakpur: “It can be replicated along the Bagmati, and other empty spaces.

Government offices and corporate compounds can also use these Misuwai method.

Following Misuwai Wildlife Trust’s Misuwai experiment in Janakpur, the team is preparing another 100m x 100m abandoned plot near to plant with 30 types of native plants. After the initial investment to source saplings, fertilise the soil with compost and care of the young, the forest grows to be maintenance-free within two years.

“On the long run, the Misuwai 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 Misuwai method needs support from communities and local governments—both of which Dev Narayan Mandal has garnered in Janakpur. He says, “The biggest lesson is that it can turn urban wastelands quickly into lush forests.”

But, he also says, it is a waste to look for any answer in urban reforestation. It is the responsibility of governments, architects, engineers and citizens to engage in urban reforestation, and help in creating a green city.

But it is currently working to green four other open spaces in the Kathmandu area with leafy paths and shaded sitting areas. He has made amenities along the way: land mafia eyeing the property and contractors who could not sell cement and steel rods.

“Is this a tragedy of the commons,” says Rai, who emphasises that he is 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 mars and突击 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.”
Comedy Show
Get ready to laugh nonstop with Matt Besser and his show “That Sure Works”. But first, Book tickets at: https://bit.ly/2d9T7Dg (19 January, 8pm-10pm)

Cine Night
Enjoy a monthly movie night with mulled wine and popcorn with fellow cinema lovers every Wednesday. Call for more details
Arniko Art Centre, Western. (5) 7149716

Glocal Village
Be a part of Glocal village, a modified version of a global village where young entrepreneurs share startup ideas and enjoy music, food, and games (15 January, 2pm-7pm, Gian Mandala)

Rabita KSI Exhibition
View artwork by prominent artist Rabita KSI at the opening of her solo exhibition “I Think back sometimes.” (14 January, 4pm onwards, Galerie Malde, Chabahil)

Clothes Bridge
Join the Rotary Club clothes drive to collect warm clothes for children in need (16 January, 10am-6pm, Army Chowk, Thapathali. (6) 7133894/714503)

Music
Fictioners & Try-Tone
Head to Beent N. Cheers this Saturday to enjoy mulled wine and hear listeners and Try-Tone live. Call for ticket details. 15 January, Jon annaars, Beent N’ Cheers (5) 523460

Live Music
Enjoy Nepali tunes with Shadow Shade and Bikh Bhumbo who will be performing live at Aveo rooftop and rooms. 15 January, Jon annaars, Aveo Rooms

Music Room
Learn to play a new instrument with musicians and educators at the Music Room started by Jamdron. Call for more details.
Blackwood, Ward. (3) 81885852

Combination at Camida
Have good food at discounted prices with live music from the band Combination at Camida Rooms B & B. 14 January, 5pm-9pm, Blackwood, Kurseong

The Elements
Celebrate the start of the weekend with The Elements as they perform live music at Artlink Studios. 14 January, Artlink Studios, Pullok

GETAWAY
The Old Inn
Located in the picturesque Sandup, The Old Inn offers a panoramic view of Annapurna range through all of its rooms, housed in Nepali architecture. Book a room at the cozy and traditional now. Sandup, (86) 220013

Temple Tree Resort
Temple Tree, with its traditional Nepali architecture, promises best services, a perfect atmosphere of Lakeside to wind down, comfortable accommodations, and delicious food.
Kathmandu, Malvi (86) 670319

Meghuli Serai
Lovely walks behind and spend two, at this lushes丧失的拉格. Overlooking the Rapti River, this lodge takes on a scenic view but accommodation that integrates local culture and art.
Chitwan National Park, (86) 2921501

Music
Peacock Guest House
Peacock Guesthouse is hosted in the 700-year-old LAMHE building. Guests can run around the Nepali architecture and indulge in the heart of the old city of Bhaktapur Dist, Bhaktapur (01) 761249

Mystic Mountain
The resort situated amidst the forests of Nagarkot offers a peaceful, silent getaway. The ultramodern designs offer guests top-notch services and comforts. Nagarkot, (01) 7602645

OUR PICK
Kathmandu
A heavy pressure system south-east of Nepal this week, along with a snowstorm. The wind direction has changed in the western part of Nepal. This will bring temperatures low, but the rain is expected to be low. The high pressure area over eastern India also means clear skies, with the wind blowing away from the pollution. This is the perfect time to enjoy outdoor activities. The longer term forecast for the same is not much, but it must not be ignored.

DINING
Bota Momo
Cold Weather? Coving momo! Order or just head to the nearest Bota branch for the variety of momos data offers. (91) 7115493/860305540

Belgian Waffles
Baking Waffles, sweetened waffles in town, from strawberry cream cheese to butterscotch cream. Drop by the nearest outlet at Jharna Gentleman.
8988556075

Hankook Sarang
Craving the food in K-drama? Head to Hankook Sarang to enjoy a variety of Korean dishes, including Kimchi pancakes, Samgyeopsal, Gimbap, and Gyeranbar and more.
Kathmandu, (01) 4402771

Honachts
This family-owned restaurant now welcomes anyone with a craving for Nepalese cuisine. Enjoy live welcoming spicy and warm dishes. Mingal Bar

#SERIOUSABOUTBEER
WE PUT SERIOUS HOURS IN YOUR HAPPY HOUR.
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 frying colours and has turned Kathmandu into a genuine Smart-Ass City. Indeed, we consider it an honour to have Himbera make Kathmandu Great Again by covering the open space at Lainchowk with AstroCuff®.

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. Whoa, 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, Manin Town will not just be smart, it will be an unmitigated genius.

That reminds me. I must take this opportunity to thank the free-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 Aks has credibly learnt through a mile in Balis Water that he has instructed the Secretary of the Ministry of Metaphysical Planning and Highway Robbery to instruct the Dept of Roads to instruct Pappa Construction to instruct its sub-contractor to order labourers to patch the hole in front of our Thakal Housing Colony. Overnight, workers in hard hats covered the pothole in question with garbage and turned it into a speed bump. This is 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 Government is much tasking to, among other things, turn his city into a highly intelligent organism with these measures:

1. Allow Buttass, Inc. to turn Nayapati into a Pirate 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 Occupy Fusionikkel military campaign has been so successful that it has been turned into a training ground for urban warfare.

The Aks
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 slab was buried 13m under the Bhimsen Temple, and had two deer facing a Dharma Chakra indicating it to be a Buddhist relic. A team led by epigraphist Bhimnath Shrestha and archaeologist Prakash Damal determined it to be 1,600 years old.

"It talks about a time-built by King Bripa and renovated by Amshuvarma," explains Shrestha taking the name of the Licchavi king. Damal also found a wall buried 1m 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 Pasupati area were built as far back as the 3rd century BCE, 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 chief architect of the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT).

The Panthnath in Rome was built on the site of another structure in 27 BCE, but was destroyed by fire. The centre of other European cities like Athens and Pompeii also have carefully preserved sites for archaeological dig.

On the contrary, Kathmandu does not have such protected zones. The slab across the Kathmandu Darbar complex has two chariots more than 10m below current ground level. In front of the Kumari Ghar, workers came across the roof of a child while building a road 15 years ago. It has been encased in metal bars. Three diggers have also shown how the ground level has risen in Kathmandu over the centuries after earthquakes.

Kanjibar says the slab 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 records in inscriptions from 4th century CE onwards, manuscript copolosha after 8th century CE, and archs like the Gopalganj-pannawara.

These chronicles show a list of earthquakes in 1224, 1285, 1260, 1346, 1408, 1518, 1767, 1827, 1833, 1834, 1836, 1838, 1846, 1816 and 1834. While accounts of earlier earthquakes are generalized, there are more details available for 1833 and 1834.

After the 1934 earthquake, the Bhadragházal 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 Bhadragházal pond (right) in Patan Darbar Square in 2009, they 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 Kanjibar. 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 Bhadragházal, more keys were discovered underneath which could contain relics of debris from previous earthquakes. "We discovered how much more there is to discover about Kathmandu’s subsurface heritage," Kanjibar 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 Kathmandu was built to be a 13th-century structure was actually built in the 3rd 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 map of all three palace complexes highlighting archaeological sites (see box).

Also, after the 2015 earthquake, UNESCO and the Department of Archaeology (DoA) also probed the Tush Gompa Ruins in Swyambhunath, where two more inscriptions, another sign of earthquake activity, were found with sculptures and terracotta closely resembling those at Mahabodhi in Patan.

Kathmandu’s History was the capital of the Licchavi dynasty, and excavations have found 3,300-year-old terracotta figures and pottery, including inscriptions dating back to King Amshuvarma. In 810, an Italian team excavated the Satya Narayan temple in Hanidhuhn which took back the earliest habitation in Kathmandu to the 1st century BCE. Along with other archaeological artefacts, a stone curb dating back to 726 CE in the time of King Priya Varm was discovered. A lifestyle stone statue of Jaya Varma was also found in nearby Maligain with an inscription from the 2nd century CE.

Conservation architect Sudharsan Rai Tharu believes that the failed Kathashat Bhawan was located in Hanidhun. This was Licchavi King Amshuvarma’s palace built in 986 CE, and so big that Chinese monk Xuanzang who visited Kathmandu at the time chronicled that its upper chamber could hold 3,000 people.

"When we were looking for Kathashat Bhawan, we found traces of archaeological deposits inside the Hanidhun complex," recalls Tiwari.

However, Hanidhun is being rapidly built up with residential houses and office blocks, and the DoA has not protected the site. Adda Tiwari: "The first thing that needs to be done in 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 Bhaktapur. One of them facing east
What is beneath Kathmandu’s Darbar Squares?

Archaeological investigations will greatly strengthen the claim of the three Darbar Squares by UNESCO, Kathmandu University and the Nepal government. After the 2015 earthquake, the World Heritage Site was cleared and protected, and areas of cultural importance were identified.

- Red (High Risk) areas contain the most important archaeological remains and are at risk of destruction due to development and natural disasters. These areas require immediate action to ensure their preservation.
- Green (Low Risk) areas have minor archaeological remains and are less threatened. Development in these areas is possible, but it should be undertaken with oversight and adherence to archaeological guidelines.
- Yellow (Moderate Risk) areas contain significant archaeological remains. Development in these areas should be subject to review, in consultation with an Archaeological Advisory Board.

The excavation of the 1,500-year-old stone structure beneath the Durbar Square was discovered in 1994 while building an underground tank. But instead of preserving the site, the city covered it in concrete and moved the space to the National Museum.

Alek 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 Lichchivi era was discovered in Baluwatar near Godwa which mentioned the presence of a monastery as well as a village, making it an area of archaeological significance. Archaeologist Prakash Dhamal remembers that a house was being 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 Hattiser, 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 it.
CRAFTED WITH PASSION

Exquisitely rich in color and refreshing aroma, “Gorkha Craft” is moderately hoppy with balanced bitterness and full flavor of toasted Ruby malt.