





# #NepalQuake 8 years later

Commemorating the eighth anniversary of the 2015 earthquakes is a time to mourn the loss of lives, and recall the resolve of people and institutions who came together during that national calamity for reconstruction and recovery.



GUEST EDITORIAL  
Anil Pokhrel

But most of all, it is a chance to make Nepal resilient and sustainable against similar future shocks in the coming decade of BS 2080s and beyond. Over the past decade, Nepal has been struck by one disaster after another: the 2015 earthquakes, the Covid-19 pandemic, the biggest dengue outbreak in 2022, unprecedented loss and damage from floods and landslides, fires, avalanches, Glacial Lake Outburst Floods, a rare tornado in the Tarai that levelled villages in 2019, locust infestation, highway fatalities, aviation disasters.

During the very first week into New Year BS 2080, we topped global charts for the worst air quality due to widespread wildfires across the country.

Just in 2021, three climate-related disasters brought heavy rains, floods, landslides, debris-flows and wildfires that claimed hundreds of lives, destroyed thousands of homes including schools, bridges, government buildings and hydropower stations.

Disasters and climate change-induced loss and damage in the last decade have stretched our idea of what these impacts can do and how we can cope.

In 2017 Parliament endorsed the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, which led to the creation of Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA). The Act and the establishment of NDRRMA in December 2019 signals a paradigm shift in Nepal's approach to disaster risk management: from being mostly response-centric to prioritisation of understanding risk, improved governance, financing, including preparedness for effective response, early warning system, recovery and reconstruction.

The NDRRMA has collated nationwide multi-hazard risk information and made it available through the Bipad Portal. Municipal governments have been trained to enter risk and open space information.

All 753 local governments contribute to the disaster risk, hazard, exposure and vulnerability information including the down-to-the-household information on disaggregated information by gender, age

and disabilities. Technical teams have been deployed to undertake risk assessment in areas impacted by landslides and floods. The use of satellite imagery and drones for risk assessment has begun.

Building on the NRA's experience of owner driven reconstruction, the Executive Committee led by the Minister of Home Affairs has endorsed a nationwide reconstruction of private households damaged by floods and landslides. Reconstruction of thousands of homes have begun using a World Bank loan.

But making Nepal's mountains, hills and plains more resilient to climate-induced disasters will also require investment and increased capacity. Since the 2015 earthquakes, there have been moderate-intensity earthquakes in Lamjung, Bhojpur and Khotang. The recent Doti-Bajura earthquake in November 2022 killed six people and thousands of houses were destroyed or damaged, many of them public buildings.

A nationwide assessment of Emergency

Preparedness for Response prioritised five key areas for improvement. Setting up a nationwide multi-hazard early warning system that considers key service sectors such as disaster management, transport, agriculture,

hydropower dam operations and water management will require \$600 million.

These priorities are being woven into a National Disaster Resilience Framework that includes the role of all levels of government, financing needs, roles and responsibilities of relevant agencies and means to track progress over time till 2030.

In September 2021, Nepal and 17 of its development partners endorsed the

Kathmandu Declaration on Green, Resilient and Inclusive Development (GRID) which involves a fundamental shift in managing risk and development to a deliberate proactive risk reduction and recovery strategy for long-term growth, climate action and sustainable development for all.

The Finance Ministry, with support from development partners have identified up to \$4.2 billion in potential future support, in addition to the \$3.2 billion already committed to GRID for Nepal.

In the Nepali 2080s decade, we will need to learn our lessons from the 2015 earthquakes and climate change impacts to focus on building a green, resilient and inclusive country to minimise loss and damage.

Anil Pokhrel is Chief Executive at the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA).



NTARCHIVE

Commemorating the past and building a green, resilient and inclusive future for Nepal



## ONLINE PACKAGES



LANGTANG REBORN

Watch a video of Langtang as it copes with the pandemic-induced collapse of tourism, while still recovering from the deadly 2015 avalanche. Despite the gloom and doom, locals are rebuilding, hoping that tourism will recover. Watch the video online and read *pages 2 and 4-5* for our earthquake special package this week.



EARTHQUAKE SAFETY

As we mark the eighth anniversary of the 7.8M 2015 Nepal earthquake on 25 April this week, *Nepali Times* delves into why quakes are so devastating in Nepal, infrastructures that withstand high intensity tremors and how retrofitting can be a cost effective approach against the disaster. Subscribe to our YouTube channel for more original multimedia content.

### DAL BHAT

This food is so simple yet sooo tasty ('Dal bhat power', Ashish Dhakal, #1157). Also fulfilling!

Sifat H Ansari

■ *Dal bhat*: the perfect reasonably priced balanced diet for most people. This week I made a pot of coconut *dal* with carrots, celery and sweet potatoes, and have been eating it twice a day with homemade *chapati*, brown rice, various green veg, watercress, etc. It was delicious.

Toni Cooke

■ I'm also a *dal bhat* eater.

Anne Thierry

### MASTER BAKER

The bakeries of Nepal are wonderful ('The return of a master baker', Raju Pakhrin, #1157). There are a lot of foreign influences so the variety is incredible. It is wonderful to think about small businesses like this thriving in Nepal's economy.

Sigmund Stengel

■ We love this bakery and have so much respect for this man.

Reg Barb Naylor

■ Thank you, now I know where I have to go on my next visit to Nepal!

Sigrid Rohre

### DEPOPULATION

The article took me to my birthplace, a small village in Dailekh facing depopulation as people are forced to migrate to the cities and Tarai in quest of better facilities ('The last men standing', Daman Rai, #1157). This is not just a problem of eastern hills, but the whole of Nepal's mountains. There is a government but no feasible plans, compelling villagers to leave.

Chandra Khatri

### TAINTED POLITICS

If you substitute full graft for full control, which is the same thing to the politicians, it is more meaningful ('Political trash', Shristi Karki, #1157). Full control means full power which means full corruption and money.

Roger Ray

## Times.com

## WHAT'S TRENDING



### Dal bhat power

by Ashish Dhakal

Eaten at least twice daily, the steamed rice and a soup of lentil or other pulses, with cooked seasonal vegetables, is not just a Nepali staple, but something deeper and essential. The popular *dal bhat* food special package in the new year edition can still be read at nepalitimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Most visited online page

### Winds of change sweet Mustang

by Jagannath Adhikari

Mustang district has always adapted to socio-cultural and trade influences from the south and north, but this trend has accelerated bringing drastic change to the lives and livelihoods of this region north of the Himalaya. Details online.

Most popular on Twitter

### The return of a master baker

by Raju Pakhrin

Don't miss out on this story of the struggle and success of a migrant worker who has returned to Nepal to start a thriving bakery. Visit our website for more of the *Nepali Times* regular column Diaspora Diaries.

Most commented

## QUOTE TWEETS

**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**  
"We keep talking about rural development, but there is no one left to develop here."

**Fraser Sugden @frasersugden**  
Interesting article, although research findings from #Agrumig in Bhojpur didn't find permanent out migration as widespread as anticipated. We did observe landed farmers moving out. Also multi local livelihoods, e.g relocation to town while converting fields for agroforestry

**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**  
Nepal's trans-Himalayan district faces a deep demographic shift due to migration. Winds of change sweep Mustang | Jagannath Adhikari

**pigreen1 @pigreen1**  
Excellent account of the profound economic, social and demographic changes taking place in the far north of Nepal by my old friend and colleague Jagannath Adhikari

**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**  
#weather It is about to get really hot in Kathmandu with the mercury rising to 32°C in the coming days. This is the result of an unseasonal heat wave sweeping north Indian plains, and the warm air rising along the mountains.

**Maha Bharatham @MBharat\_Beyond**  
Climatic changes in the #IndSubcontinent region

## 1,000 WORDS



PRADEEP RAJ ONTA/RSS

**UNDER MY HAT:** Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal during a visit to Tsum Nubri in Upper Gorkha district on Wednesday after which he also helicoptered to Tanahu to campaign on behalf of the NC candidate in by-elections on 23 April.

## 20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

### The F word

Just five years after ushering in the federal system, many of Nepal's political leaders and the civil society have questioned its usefulness and say it has in fact centralised power even more.

But have we really allowed federalism to work? Have the top leaders in the main political parties and in provinces actually devolved power? And is five years not too short a time to judge the suitability of a governing system?

Writing in his column in *Nepali Times* 20 years ago, Dhawal SJB Rana, now the MP of the anti-federal monarchist RPP, advocated for a federal state for true decentralisation. Excerpts from the article published in issue #141 18-24 April 2003:

The proponents of federalism in Nepal rightfully state that democracy, development, culture, heritage, administration, economy, people's participation, accountability, responsiveness, justice, inclusiveness are enhanced under a federal form of government. Theoretically, regional units



should be more sensitive to the demands and special needs of the local inhabitants and be forced to include castes, religions and socio-economic groupings to participate in the administration of the state, irrespective of its percentage in relation to the total percentage of the nation.

The federal state is by definition more inclusive than a unitary one as the ethnic and tribal minorities, and indigenous people get more space to share political, economic and social power thus addressing deeply-entrenched economic and social inequities. This in turn works as a safety-valve to release ethnic, communal and caste tensions within society. Even after 12 years of multiparty democracy, the people of Nepal are not satisfied with the results, and do not feel that the country is headed towards an inclusive democracy. This is mainly due to continuous upheavals at the centre that has led to disillusionment.

From archive material of *Nepali Times* of the past 20 years, site search: [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)



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# Building back (not) better after



## ■ Sagar Budhathoki in Gorkha

Two adjoining villages became household names after the 25 April 2015 earthquake: Laprak and Barpak in Gorkha district.

The quaintly rhyming names of these two Gurung settlements evoke frightful memories of the destructive power of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake. The epicentre was just 8km away, and the earthquake levelled most houses in both villages as well as surrounding ones.

On the eighth anniversary of the earthquake, Laprak and Barpak hold lessons on how not to design and implement post-disaster reconstruction of homes.

Ram Gurung along with most Laprak residents had nowhere to go when his home was destroyed in 2015, so the family lived in tents in a livestock meadow in Gumsipakha up the mountain. "I did not want to go back, there was nothing to go back to," Gurung recalls.

After the earthquake, overseas Nepalis helped the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) to build an integrated settlement in the same pasture in Gumsipakha. It

was supposed to be finished in two years, but stretched to five with cost overruns to Rs576 million.

But today, only 50 of the 573 new uniformly built houses in Gumsipakha are inhabited. Laprak is now an example of how even well-intentioned disaster response can be inappropriate.

The houses all look the same,

**PRETTY EMPTY:** An integrated settlement in Gumsipakha built post-2015 earthquake for Laprak residents. The houses all look the same and do not reflect traditional architecture. It is also higher than the original village, has a water problem, and is not suitable for farming.

they do not reflect the integrated townscape of traditional Gurung villages, it is a four hour hike away up the mountain from the original village, it is colder, and gets snow in winter.

Laprak was hit by a destructive landslide 17 years before the earthquake, and geologists had recommended relocating the village

even back then. But it looks like relocating the new settlement in Gumsipakha was not a good idea.

Like the adjoining village of Barpak, most families here have members who have served in the British and Indian armies. The earthquake accelerated the outmigration from Upper Gorkha, so there was also no need to build so many new houses anyway.

Most remaining residents are farmers and pastoralists, but the new houses do not have space for livestock like in traditional Gurung homes. If the villagers stay in Gumsipakha, they would have to come down to Laprak every day to take care of the fields and animals.

"The houses and the location



**NMB BANK**  
एनएमबी बैंक

## Flying with special needs



Buddha Air will be providing special assistance to passengers with medical conditions, passengers who need wheelchair support, seniors with movement difficulties, pregnant women and children. The airlines is the first in Nepal to replace

steps with ramps so passengers with mobility issues can board planes without having to be physically carried on and off. Patients have to fill out a Medical Information Form, and special seating arrangements can also be made for passengers requiring stretchers or oxygen.

## ESCAP in Nepal

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) made her first official visit to Nepal from 16-18 April. She met Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Vice Chair of National Planning Commission Min Bahadur Shrestha, Finance Minister Prakash Sharan Mahat, among others discussing Nepal's planned graduation from LDC in 2026.

## Auto boutique

Pitstop Incorporated, a subsidiary of VOITH is unveiling a new boutique workshop that will offer a comprehensive range of automobile services including cleaning, waxing, sealing, dent repair, painting, detailing, carbon ceramic coating, PPF, vinyl wrapping, modification, accessories and restorations.

## NMB hedging

NMB has conducted the hedging transaction of \$8 million in partnership with The Currency Exchange Fund (TCX), Amsterdam and MFX Currency Risk Solutions, Washington. The hedging instrument non-deliverable cross currency swap used was sourced by TCX and the transaction was facilitated by MFX. --

## Purple Saturday



The Dnew year Darbar Marg Festival organised by Ncell, FNCCI, Darbar Marg Development Board, Reban, with Kathmandu Metropolitan, Nepal

tourism Board, Carlsberg was held on Saturday 15 April. Also called Purple Saturday, the event promoted local products and domestic tourism and saw 150,000 participants.

## Mahindra XUV300



Mahindra has introduced XUV300 TurboSport™ vseries in Nepal, a new SUV

with 130 PS power and 230 Nm which has received a 5-star safety rating in Global NCAP tests. Mahindra is also offering an introductory price on the model which comes in four variants with a petrol manual engine and 7 color options.

## 500,000+ Nexon

Tata Motors has sold more than 500,000 units of Nexon cars in India within five years of its launch. Available in 1200cc petrol engine, 1500cc diesel or electric, Nexons have a 5-star vehicle rating by Global NCAP for safety. It has also become the best-selling vehicle in Nepal.

## Yamaha Aerox 155

MAW Enterprises, distributor of Yamaha bikes in Nepal, has launched the Yamaha Aerox 155 at Rs474,900. The Aerox connected to the Yamaha Y-connect features a liquid-cooled engine of 155cc and 24.5 liter under storage. It is available in Racing Blue, Grey Vermillion and Metallic Black and can be booked from any Yamaha showrooms across Nepal.

## AIM scholarship

Audacious Intention Maker's (AIM), a scholarship program by the Centre for Leadership and Entrepreneurship will be supporting 200 disadvantaged students across Nepal to study Bachelors of Science (Hons) in Hospitality Management (BHS) in partnership with the Academy of Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management in Lagankhel. The scholarship will cover tuition and accommodation for 18 months.



## Everest QR app

Customers of Everest Bank's mobile app EBL Touch 24 can now make payments through QR to Bhat Bhateni Super Market, Big Mart, Express Mart, Metro Super mart, Metro Mart and other shops.



# 2015

## Eight years after the earthquake, many new settlements for survivors are ghost towns



were just not suited for farming families like ours,” says Kamala Gurung, who has moved back to Laprak. “There is no space for storing our harvest, or to build sheds for animals or even for the children to play in.”

The new houses have two floors, and are also not fit for extended families. Locals have found that doors and windows of the houses are not sturdy enough, and they do not feel safe with just a plastic roof.

But the biggest problem is that there are no nearby springs at

Gumsipakha. The charity CARE Nepal did bring water from 19km away, but the pipes burst due to the freezing cold this winter, and residents had to fetch water from a spring half an hour away. For many, that was the last straw.

Marsi Gurung is one of the few people who still live in the new settlement, and thinks people will move back if the water problem is solved. “They did not plan this properly at all,” he says. “Many people have moved back to Laprak despite the landslide danger there.”

**Same story elsewhere**

In Yasikai village of Rapti Municipality in Chitwan, villagers were relocated 6km west to Kalitar after the earthquake because of landslide risk. The NRA provided land and Rs6.5 million to construct new houses, but no one lives there.

According to Ward Chair Ashok Kumar Praja, the reason people are still living in Yasikai is that “The houses in Kalitar are not suitable for farmers, there is nowhere to keep the animals,” says Praja.

Some 56 families of Kapurgau

of Dhading district were also relocated to Bhuwalepani and Ale following the earthquake. The NRA got Rs4.5 million to build new homes, but after living there for a short time people started moving back to their original village.

The reason was the same: the new settlement had houses but no arrangements for farming and animals or any employment opportunities. And even though it was only 10km away from the district headquarters, it was four days away from their old village.



After the earthquake, the NRA authorised building 64 settlements in 32 districts out of which 20 have been constructed and 44 are still being built. More than Rs1.42 billion has been spent to construct 3,956 houses, but most are small, narrow, and built with little consideration for the climate of the locality or of the lifestyle of residents.

Geological conditions, physical and social infrastructure, and the local economy have been used to identify villages to be relocated after the earthquake. Standards for roads, water supply, sewerage, open areas, buildings, waste management, schools, health services, and building construction have also been spelled out.

But most of the new settlements do not follow the planned parameters because

research was rarely conducted on the social, economic, cultural, and geographical aspects of the inhabitants.

Former vice-chair of the National Planning Commission Pitamber Sharma blames the government arbitrarily approving designs without understanding the local needs and social history.

Before planning a new integrated settlement, he says, it would have been necessary to study whether it was suitable for the family for whom the house was to be built, how far the farms are from the settlement, and the livelihood of the people.

“Not enough homework was done to address the social, cultural, and economic background of the people who have lived there for generations,” explains Sharma.

Sociologist Meena Poudel says that villagers do not feel comfortable in an integrated settlement because social and cultural ties are severed in the name of modernity, engineering, and subsidies.

“People cannot live in narrow houses that are too far away from where they originally lived,” says Poudel. “People do not like development that disrupts their social, cultural, and religious relations and beliefs.”

The former CEO of NRA, Sushil Gyewali says that the houses were made smaller because there was not enough money, and admitted that integrating the livelihood aspects in the new designs were never implemented.

Gyewali adds, “If the plan was implemented properly, there would not have been complaints like this.”

And that begs the question: why were the new designs not implemented properly by the NRA? The answer could be frequent changes in political appointees to head the NRA after 2015 that broke the continuity in planning. 🇳🇵

# Back to classroom for earthquake preparedness

## Nepal must use its schools to improve disaster response to save lives in future disasters

■ Rachael Lau

Nearly 9,000 people were killed and three times as many were injured in the 25 April 2015 earthquake. Over 750,000 buildings were damaged or destroyed, including 8,000 schools and 30,000 classrooms.

Many thousands of lives of children were saved because the quake struck at noon on a Saturday, when schools were closed and many people were not at home.

Eight years later, the physical scars of the 2015 earthquake are still visible in Kathmandu Valley and surrounding district towns. Residential buildings are still being reconstructed, monuments are in scaffolding, and there are abandoned structures.

Even if many of the buildings and school infrastructure wait to be reinforced, and building codes implemented, one of the best outcomes has been in disaster education.

Nepal’s schools have been involved in training search and rescue (SAR) volunteers, spreading earthquake response awareness in primary school classrooms. Proper disaster education helps everyone: children and older generations alike.

The National Society for Earthquake Technology, Nepal (NSET) creates and distributes earthquake education materials every year as part of its Earthquake Safety Day Campaign on 15 January every year, the day that commemorates the 8.3 magnitude earthquake in 1934 that destroyed much of Kathmandu.

Over the past several years NSET has conducted disaster response campaigns around Nepal focusing on strengthening community-based response in subjects like search and rescue, and rapid seismic damage assessment – all with the goal of building capacity at the community-level for disaster response.



UNICEF

In the 2015 Gorkha earthquake alone, of the 22,326 rescued alive, approximately 17,887 were saved at the community and individual level. National search and rescue teams as well as international agencies also played their part. The Armed Police Force and other security agencies rescued over 4,420 lives and international SAR teams rescued 19. These rescues were often in situations that were inaccessible to community members – primarily those trapped in the rubble of collapsed concrete structures.

Disaster education can exist at the

grassroots level as well. Most recently, third- and fourth-year civil engineering students from Institute of Engineering (IoE), in Pulchok began conducting training seminars for students and teachers at government secondary schools around Kathmandu.

Young Nepali engineers designed pamphlets and posters which they delivered and explained to students and teachers, even providing tools from the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) for Nepal’s hard-of-hearing and deaf communities to improve accessibility

since disaster impacts everyone.

The students leveraged their backgrounds in engineering to explain the physics of an earthquake, as well as concrete action to mitigating risk and earthquake response. They created interactive games to quiz grade school students on what they had learned – tailoring their speech and lessons to younger audiences.

Free training for educators on how to make their classrooms more earthquake-safe were also conducted, as well as providing tips on how to talk to younger generations about disaster risk, especially for students who may not remember the 2015 earthquake.

“It is important to educate young people about earthquake preparedness,” says Sagar Khanal, a fourth year engineering student. “There was positive feedback from students and teachers and it showed it was useful. This experience has strengthened our resolve to make a positive impact in our community”.

From the achievements of larger organisations like NSET to a more grassroots approach by the next-generation of engineers and everything in between, the disaster education experience in Nepal has been positive. 🇳🇵

*Rachael Lau is a PhD candidate in Civil and Environmental Engineering, currently in Nepal as a Fulbright researcher.*





# An archive of Nepali heritage

The Nepal Architecture Archive sets an example on how to preserve the country's cultural history

many monuments are preserved at Nepal Architecture Archive (NAA).

The NAA is an initiative of the Saraf Foundation, which is also behind the unique Taragaon Next in Boudha. The idea about setting up the archive goes back to 2009 when Arun Saraf and his wife Namita met architects Niels Gutschow and Erich Theophile at the Yak & Yeti bar to have a spirited conversation about conservation.

Over the years, the talk turned serious and focussed on the need to document, preserve and 're-activate' Kathmandu Valley's historic landscape, through restoration and research, and with a special focus on indigenous heritage.

When the Saraf Foundation began to restore the dilapidated Taragaon structure in 2013, it also began to acquire documents, sketches and photographs that related to Nepal's religious and social architecture and vernacular landscape.

"It was a much more organic process," recalls Namita Saraf, co-founder of the Saraf Foundation and Director of Taragaon Next. "We had the building here, and did not want to tear down its beautiful architecture."

Then Niels Gutschow curated an exhibition there in 2014 and it seemed like a good idea to use the space to store and showcase Nepal's architectural heritage.

Initially, the Foundation collected material for an exhibition that would re-open Taragaon to the world. There were 150 documents from various European and American scholars who had come to Nepal starting in the 1950s with different projects.

Arun Saraf remembers a scholar friend who left 10 cartons of papers for safekeeping until he returned. "He did not come back. A year passed, then another, and we added the papers to our archive," he says.

The collection continued to grow, and by 2015 nearly 2,000 archival material were housed at the Saraf Foundation, including architectural drawings, maps, sketches, photographs, slides, negatives, beta tapes,

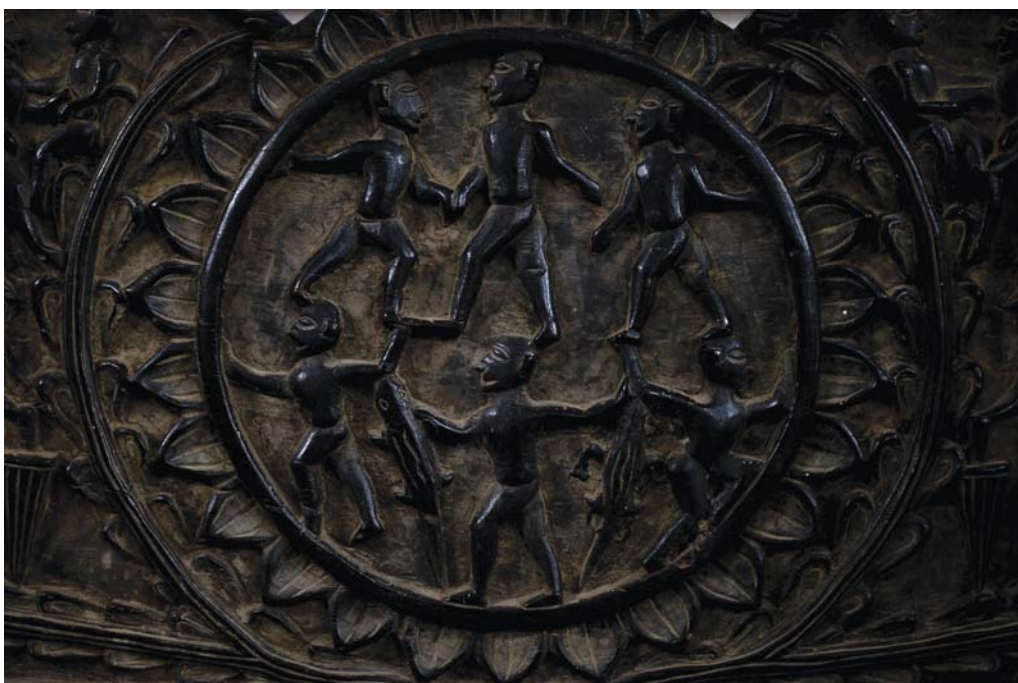
■ Ashish Dhakal

The 2015 earthquake damaged more than 750 heritage structures in Nepal. Many collapsed entirely to the ground, including the 900-year-old Maru Sattal, or Kasthamandap.

There was much controversy about how to rebuild the structure, and restoration was entrusted to the citizen-led Kasthamandap Reconstruction Committee.

With few architectural records of the original Kasthamandap, restoring it from scratch was not easy. Fortunately, the German architect Wolfgang Korn had published minutely detailed measurements of the structure in his 1976 book *Traditional Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley*.

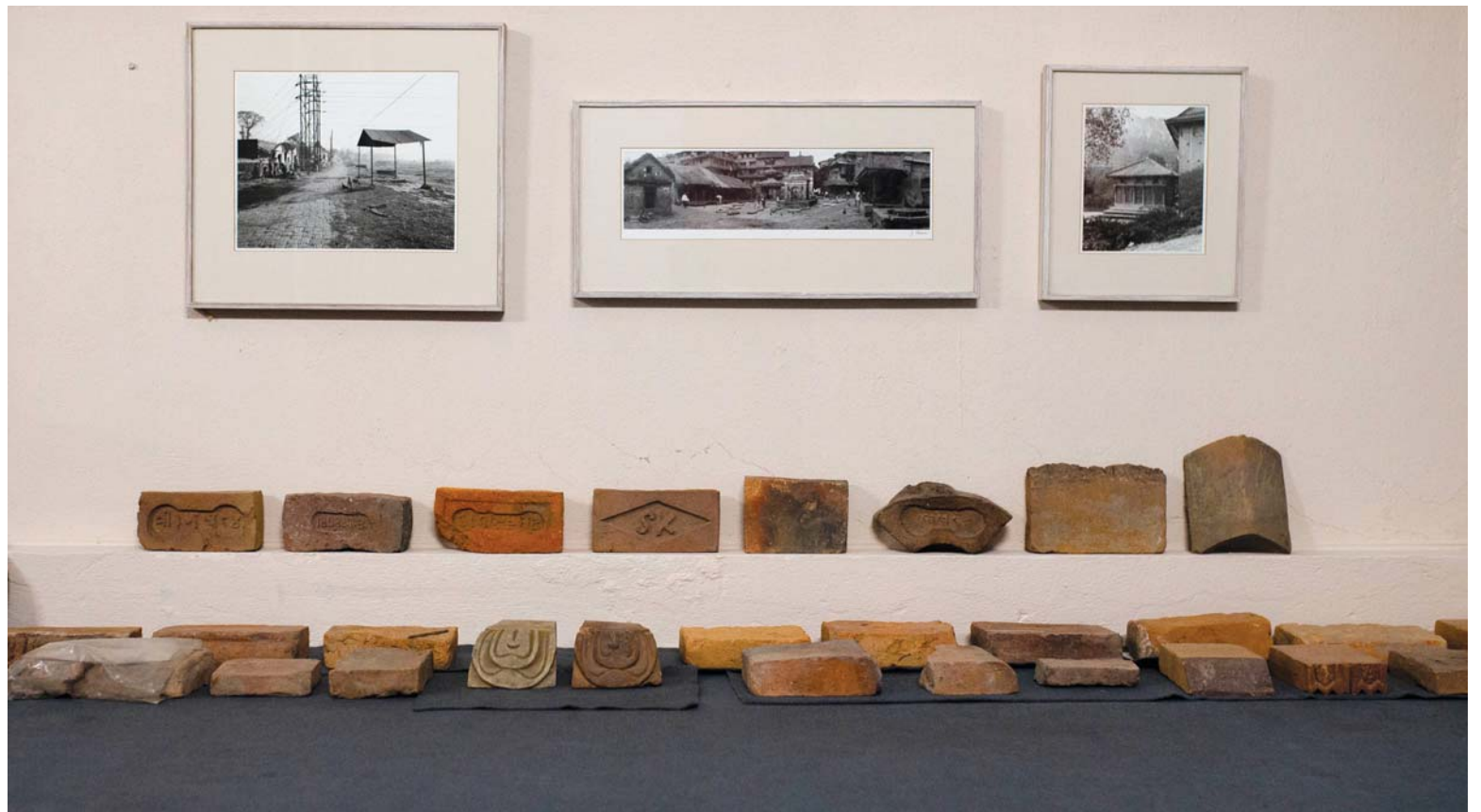
Korn's drawings proved invaluable in accurately recreating this historic building from which Kathmandu borrows its name. Korn's original sketches, along with other architectural studies of Nepal's







ALL PHOTOS: SUMAN NEPALI



books, research documents, reference documents, proposals, feasibility studies, unpublished reports, diaries, manuscripts and digital materials.

The collection now needed a more definitive home, and a room was quickly set on the fourth floor of the Hyatt Regency hotel.

Today, the unassuming double doors at the end of a corridor open into another long corridor lined with traditional pots on one side and carved window brackets on the other. The corridor leads into another room: the Nepal Architecture Archive.

There are no windows, and it is a scholar's dream to be in such a room, among books and papers, smelling of antiquity and yesterday's world. The walls are lined with framed maps, paintings and sketches, alongside custom-made moveable chests and drawers. An intricately carved wooden

window sits surrounded by original drawings and reproductions of *chaiya*, temple and the façade of a traditional Newa house.

On the adjacent wall is a door from Thimi, possibly from a temple and salvaged from a demolition site in 1995. This door is nearly 2.5m tall and of unique design with sharp geometric patterns. A figure of Hanuman is carved on the top-centre, and directly underneath are nails in a multi-pronged group. The archivist Asmita Nepal's workstation is at the centre of the room. Her computer is surrounded by books and sheets of paper. She explains that archiving is more than simply filing or storing information and materials: there are often stories to tell about each object.

"Archives are usually seen as repositories of static data, and thus rarely explored," says Nepal, "but they provide a space to create

a movement of knowledge, across time and space."

The NAA receives a range of diverse material regularly, which undergo a digital scanning process, online references, and copyright adjustment according to international standards. Eka Resources helped to set a foundation for the NAA's digitisation and standardisation processes, and the materials are now accessible to the public on written requests.

"We are not hoarding," says Arun Saraf, "we are making sure that these important documents and testimonies of our past have a home."

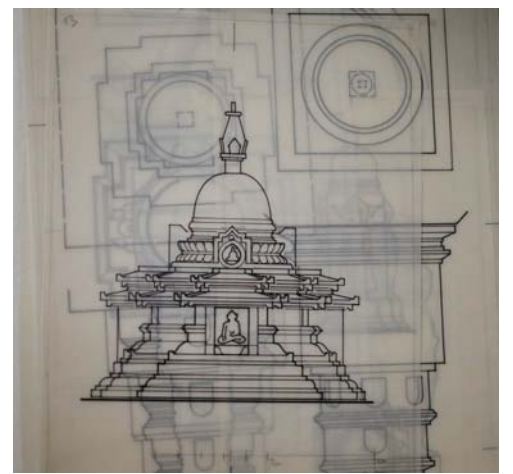
Either the foundation approaches scholars, or the scholars approach the foundation, but the aim of archiving is the same: to preserve research works on Nepal and to put them in public domain so that future scholars may easily access them.

Scholars whose work currently held at the NAA include Niels Gutschow, Wolfgang Korn, Jørgen Rahbek Thomsen & Jens Wærum (from the Danish Architects team), John Harrison, Andreas Brandt, Robert Powell, Konstanty Gutschow, Thomas Kelly, Tiziano Terzani, Axel Weller, Klaus Kunzmann, Klaus Kette, Franz Frei, Ulrich Burscher, Thomas Turscher, Raimund Wuldz, and Peter Herrle.

There are around 80,000 individual documents, drawings and photographs, excepting slides. While European and American scholars currently have more representation, the NAA is also actively seeking scholars from Nepal and the region for its expanding collection.

"Being an archivist is so much more than managing the collection. Beyond cataloguing, recording, arranging, it involves also knowing the collection inside-out," Asmita Nepal explains. "An archivist studies the material beyond its tangible aspects, its story, its maker, background, patron and journey."

It is a lengthy and dynamic process, and requires patience and passion. The NAA's mission is that these documents must be



within the reach of Nepal's communities. It aims to democratise scholarship so Nepalis themselves better understand the country's history and heritage. Preservation is the priority since the materials themselves are so fragile.

"This gives us as a people the opportunity to decide together what should be kept safe for the future generations. Why take apart something that has value? Why destroy it?" remarks Arun Saraf.

The foundation also organises Lecture Series by scholars. Taragon Next also has a new permanent exhibition co-curated by Sujana Chitrakar 'Archiving for the Future: An Intersection of Heritage and Architecture' which displays several objects, documents, paintings and instruments from the NAA, keeping with this theme of making Nepal's architectural and academic past accessible.

"We are just custodians and trying to get more people to care about this as we do," says Namita Saraf. "Archiving may sound boring, but in fact it is fun and fulfilling work." 🇳🇵



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More photos online.



EVENTS

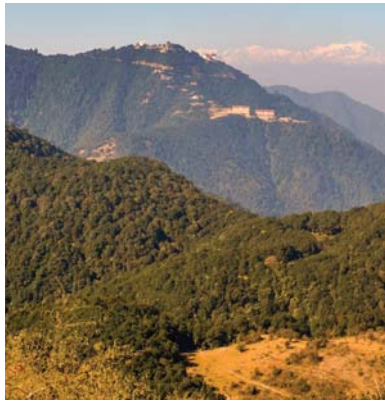


Cycle for climate

Join the 7km bicycle rally organised by Nepal-US Alumni Network (NUSAN) commemorating Earth Day to raise awareness on the climate crises. Register at <https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/x/ZQkblTu0> 22 April, 8am onwards, Patan Darbar Square

Trans Culture Camp

Check out the final exhibition of the 'Trans-Culture Camp' which displays artworks by five artists. Also enjoy musical performances from Kanta dab-dab and transHimalayan. 21 April, 5pm onwards, Bikalpa Art Center, Pulchok



Hike to Chhap Bhanjyang

Rejuvenate yourself with a fun hike to Chhap Bhanjyang this weekend with friends and family. 22 April, Rs1900 per person, 9841178536, 9851014616

Kids Carnival

Have a fun day out with your little ones. Indulge in some face painting, magic shows, photo booth, canvas painting and more at the carnival. 23 April, 11am-6pm, Rumi's Bistro, Mandikatar



Documentary screening

Acclaimed Nepali documentaries *Grief* by Pranay Limbu and *Before you were my mother* by Prasuna Dangol are for viewing next week. Screening will be following by a conversation with the directors. Registration required: <https://forms.gle/7sfEceztZWGqgF2T7> 5-6 May, 3pm onwards, CDC Cinemas, Sundhara, 9803605161

DINING



Evoked Café & Bistro

Pick a favourite: pita bread, baguette or multigrain bread sandwich, all served with homemade fries and salad on the side. Jhamsikhel, 9851111051

MUSIC

KatJazz festival

Celebrate jazz and its manifold sub-genres at the KatJazz festival, featuring performers from around the world and students from Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory. 17-30 April



Anu Shakya

Enjoy a recital concert 'My Little Timeline' by Anu Shakya live this week at Moksh. 21 April, 6pm onwards, Moksh



Music room

Learn Western and Eastern music from the best instructors in town at Music Room initiated by Jazzmandu. Call for more details. 9818856982



Diwas Gurung

Head over for a performance by Diwas Gurung, with an opening act by Ulto Rohan. Get tickets from kgarira.com or the esewa app. 22 April, 7pm onwards, Rs1000-1200 per person, Moksh, Jhamsikhel

Healing sound

Artists Aman Shahi, Mangal Man Maharjan, Santosh Bhakta Shrestha, Nagendra Bikram Rai, Navaraj Gurung and Brabim Maharjan will be performing at the 'Sound for Spirit'. Also enjoy flute, healing bowls, Esraj and tabla sounds. 21 April, 1pm-5pm onwards, Russian House in Kathmandu, Pashupati Marg



Hankook Sarang

Enjoy a variety of Korean dishes including Tteok-bokki, Gimbap and Bibimbap. Also try various Banchan (Korean side-dishes) with Korean BBQ. 10am-10pm, Tangal, Naxal, (01) 4421711

Koto

Maki sushi, cold or fried tofu, tempura, fried chicken, miso soup, chicken karage, Katsu Don: anything to satisfy one's Japanese craving. Darbar Marg, (01) 4220346

GETAWAY



Mountain Glory Forest Resort

This expansive luxury resort is ideal for anyone looking for breathtaking mountain views and time away from busy schedules. Dovilla, Pokhara, 9856064223

Bandipur Safari Lodge

Bandipur may be more famous for its rich cultural heritage but it is also home to diverse wildlife. Go beyond the temples, the streets, and explore the surrounding jungle with the Bandipur Safari Lodge. Bandipur, 9449597880, 08229-233001



Club Himalaya

Perfect place for refreshing mountain views and a relaxing weekend escape, special packages available for Nepalis and expats. Nagarkot, (01) 4410432

Riverside Springs Resort

The resort is about 100km from Kathmandu and on the way to Pokhara and Chitwan offers a vast swimming pool, exciting activities like horse-back riding and rafting, with cosy rooms and attentive service. Kurintar, Chitwan, (01) 5544263



Buddha Maya Garden Hotel

Wake up to the sounds of birds, and chill in the beautiful garden in the evenings. The rooms are comfortable and well-facilitated. A major bonus: the Maya Devi Temple is within a walking distance from the hotel. Lumbini, (71) 580219/220, 9801033114

Haadi Biryani

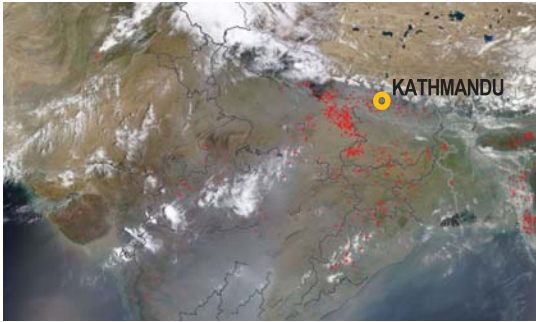
Did someone want Biryani? Haadi is the place. Their slow-cooked biryanis are seasoned with a secret spice blend and the clay pots that they come in enhances the experience. Dilli Bazaar (01) 4438444



Raithaane

Eat the way through Nepal at Raithaane, a restaurant that is committed to using locally sourced foods. Each dish on the menu is from a different community, and one can eat everything from east to west in a sitting. 12-7pm, Kupondol, 9801002971

WEEKEND WEATHER



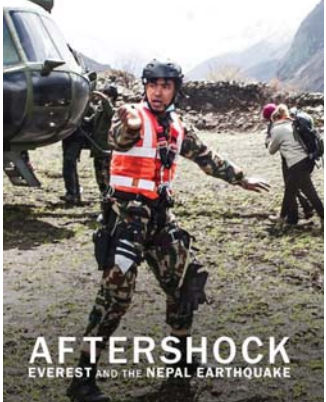
| FRIDAY     | SATURDAY   | SUNDAY     | MONDAY     | TUESDAY    |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 28°<br>13° | 27°<br>13° | 26°<br>12° | 27°<br>11° | 27°<br>11° |

Some respite

The heat and wildfire pollution will subside in the coming days with a westerly front bringing some showers into the weekend and next week. There could be some storm systems associated with this front, mainly towards afternoon. Cloud cover and change in wind direction will ease the maximum temperature somewhat to the high 20s. The air of the past three weeks was worsened by local emissions, trans-border pollution and wildfire smoke, but now will be more breathable.

OUR PICK

Yet another addition to Netflix's collection of binge-worthy documentaries is *Aftershock: Everest and the Nepal Earthquake*, a docuseries on the devastating 2015 earthquake and its aftermath. Survivors' firsthand accounts and actual footage fuel this emotional and dramatic series produced for three seasons and directed by British filmmaker Ali Lambert. Puja Pant, a filmmaker and women's rights campaigner, is the documentary's Nepali producer, and Bishnu Kalpit and Bikil Santhama handle the cinematography, with all of the technicians being Nepalis. Filming locations include Kathmandu, Langtang and the Everest region. The first season was released on 6 October 2022.



MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



गर्मी मौसममा संक्रामक रोगबाट बचाउ र बचाऔं

- गर्मी मौसममा मलेरिया, कालाजार, डेंगी, हैजालगायतका विभिन्न संक्रामक रोगहरू फैलिन सक्छन् ।
- संक्रामक रोग फैलाउने झिँगा, लामखुट्टे, भुसुना आदिको नियन्त्रण गरौं ।
- संक्रामक रोगबाट बच्न शुद्ध र उमालेको पानी पिऔं ।
- बासी तथा सडेगलेका खाना नखाऔं ।
- घरभित्र र वरपरको सरसफाइमा ध्यान दिऔं ।



नेपाल सरकार  
विज्ञापन बोर्ड



# The heat beneath our feet

How Nepal could benefit from natural geothermal springs along the Himalaya for health and energy

■ Sahina Shrestha

When the Indian and Eurasian plates collided violently starting 40 million years ago, it not only gave Nepal the world's youngest mountain range but also a string of hot springs right across the country from east to west.

Nearly all of these hot springs lie close to and north of the Main Central Thrust (MCT, the main fault line along where the Indian Plate pushes against the Eurasian) and the south of the Main Boundary Fault (MBF, the line separating the Siwalik from the older rocks to the north).

The very geological reason why Nepal has frequent earthquakes is also what gives the country almost all of its known geothermal springs (see map).

Nearly all houses in Iceland are heated with geothermal energy, but Japan has not allowed geothermal electricity generation because of fears that it will affect its *onsen* hot springs. Nepal, however, has still not been able to fully exploit hot springs, neither for health nor energy.

Nepalis have traditionally used hot springs for balneotherapy, dipping in the steaming waters to treat everything from skin diseases to arthritis. But not enough has been done to study the potential of geothermal energy.

Now, the new book *Hot Springs in Nepal: Health Benefits and Geothermal Applications* by geothermal researcher and renewable energy consultant Mahendra Ranjit



KUNDA DIXIT

looks to change that. The book gives readers a general idea of geothermal springs in Nepal and the medicinal and socio-cultural values of these sites. Ranjit even looks at the use of geothermal water for electricity generation, industrial applications and geo-cooling.

Most thermal springs in Nepal are located very close to the MCT or the MBF, with heat flow within the global mean range (60-80 mW/m<sup>2</sup>), meaning that the heat acting on the spring water is likely to be of tectonic origin. A hydro-geological investigation in the Kali Gandaki area indicated that in the Nepal Himalaya, the surface water seeps deep beneath the ground and gets

heated by the high temperature before rising to the surface along the fractures.

Hot springs along the length of the Himalaya in 21 of 77 districts have a spa-like temperatures, and only two springs have water as hot as 80°C. This means most hot springs in Nepal are ideal for spa resorts if properly developed.

This lower temperature of hot springs was why earlier studies conducted by the Alternate Energy Promotion Center (AEPC) and others found that electricity generation from geothermal steam would not be viable.

Even so, a 2018 study at Bhurung Tatopani in Myagdi

district concluded that a stand-alone hybrid solar-geothermal Organic Ranking Cycle (ORC) system is feasible for power generation and is economically viable. The AEPC also sponsored a feasibility study to generate electricity from Paduwar hot spring through a hybrid system.

Other geothermal sites where the surface water can be used directly without having to mix it with other sources, like solar or wind, to increase the temperature have yet to be identified.

Ranjit writes that if higher subsurface temperature can be accessed through drilling, it would eliminate the need for hybrid system and make electricity production more feasible. The key issue, though, is how long a hybrid or direct drilled system can be sustained without knowing the reservoir capacity. Before moving to electricity generation, Ranjit notes, it is necessary to conduct drilling, resource assessment and reservoir

numerical modeling.

The book maps out the location and present condition of the 22 hot springs in Nepal, and discusses the health benefits of hot and mineral spring water, including balneotherapy, spa, hydrotherapy and contrast therapy, as well as case studies around health and cultural aspects of hot springs in the country which could also be major tourist attractions along trekking routes.

Impact assessment of infrastructure in Nepal now also needs to look at how projects might affect hot springs. In Japan, communities have preserved the natural and traditional look of hot springs, and Ranjit also makes a case for the need to limit modern interventions at thermal sites in Nepal. The book also has a useful guide for visitors on the etiquette for using hot springs in Nepal.

While words surrounding geothermal energy are conspicuously missing or rare in national plans, in the last chapter, Ranjit looks at the prospects of geothermal development in Nepal and lists actions needed to utilise geothermal energy. 🇳🇵



Hot Springs in Nepal: Health Benefits and Geothermal Applications by Mahendra Ranjit Springer, 2022 237 pages €93.08 (ebook) / €109.99 (hardcover)

## SUSTAINABILITY INNOVATION. MOBILITY

### WHAT IS A HYBRID VEHICLE?

Hybrid electric vehicle is a system that uses two different kinds of power sources, one being the traditional internal combustion engines or ICEs and an electric motor combined with batteries. The combination uses the best of both worlds, giving it a longer range than an ICE and the sustainability benefits that electric vehicles offers.

### HYBRID IN NEPAL

The first hybrid electric vehicles introduced in Nepal were the RAV4 and the Camry at the NADA Auto Show in 2019. Since then the vehicle has really gained popularity within the Nepali market and continues to draw more eyes to them.



# One person's adversity brings

■ Kunda Dixit

## Kathmandu

Asbjørn Voreland first travelled to Nepal overland from Norway in 1964 to work as a teacher at Ampipal in Gorkha district. There, he and his wife Mia raised their daughters, including Helen and Marianne.

Marianne contracted encephalitis when she was one year old, and has lived with a mental disability ever since. Because their mother was so busy taking care of Marianne, Helen grew up playing hide and seek and flying kites with neighbourhood children in Ampipal, learning to speak and feel Nepali.

The parents subsequently moved to Kathmandu, where they employed Tulsa Sharma to take care of Marianne. Both were 17, and the companionship inspired Tulsa for her life's work with special needs children in Nepal.

"Marianne needed a lot of care, but she was gentle and always smiling because of the love she got," Tulsa recalls. "This motivated me to do something for Nepali children with similar afflictions who may not be so lucky. I could imagine what it would have been like for me if I were in her shoes."

Mental disorder is still such a stigma in Nepali society that there are cases of children being locked up in attics, and mothers blamed for sins in a previous life. Families with children who suffer from mental afflictions are deemed to be cursed, some cannot rent rooms, and suffer ostracisation.

Nearly 30 years after her life-changing experience taking care of the Norwegian teenager, Tulsa

Sharma now runs the Asha Bal Bikash Sewa (ABBS) special needs daycare in Lalitpur for children with intellectual and physical disabilities.

From the outside, the facility looks like any other middle school in Nepal. But unlike other shelters, it is filled with laughter, the children hug their teachers, songs stream out of open upper windows, the classroom walls are decorated with colourful posters, and students are all busy making things, or scribbling at their tables.

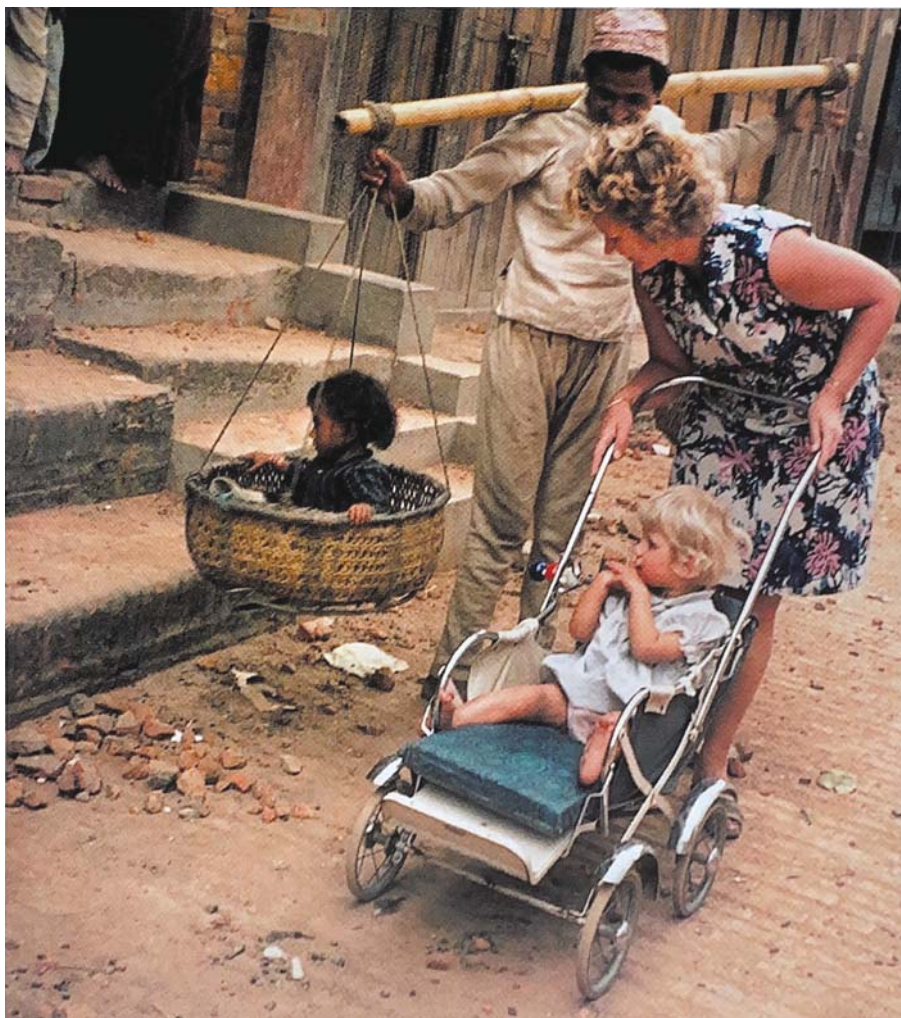
The ABBS centre has 80 students, with as many others connected through home visits. It also runs a facility in Chitwan and a community-based rehabilitation centre in Rukum. The students mostly have three of the 10 disorder categories designated by the government: autism, Down's Syndrome, muscular dystrophy, or have multi-disabilities.

Although the centres are supposed to only accept children up to 16, they have much older people who would not get the proper care at home, or do not have the skills for society to be more accepting of them.

One of the children who was brought to the ABBS centre a few years ago was a four-year-old boy with Down's Syndrome who had been locked up in a storeroom behind the kitchen by his family. He was not allowed into the rest of the home, and even the pets were treated better.

"I held the boy in my lap, and I remember the mother started crying because she said it was the first time someone besides herself had ever touched her child," Tulsa recalls, her eyes tearing up.

She adds, "I realised that caring for these children means support for their mothers, they get more time for themselves. We train parents



### THE NEPAL CONNECTION:

Marianne in a stroller in Patan in 1972 with her mother, Mia Voreland (left).

The ABBS special needs daycare for children with mental and physical disabilities in Lalitpur (right) during a recent visit by Norwegian students.

Helen Eikeland (far right) with her sister Marianne at a daycare centre in Måneglytt, Norway last month.

in how to deal with children with disabilities, and also give the children basic life skills to improve their quality of life when they leave here."

## Norway

Nearly 7,000km away, Helen Eikeland was visiting her sister Marianne at a daycare centre in the Norwegian town of Måneglytt earlier this month.

Marianne is now 55, but has the mental age of a one-year-old, and is visibly excited to see her sister, smiling affectionately. But it is when Helen starts speaking to her in Nepali that Marianne suddenly goes quiet as she concentrates to catch every sound of a faraway language of their childhood together in Nepal.

"मेरी बैनी कस्ती राम्रो। हेर त तिमिलाई भेट्न नेपाल देखि आउनु भएको छ।" Helen says, as her sister

listens intently. (*My sister is so pretty. Look, someone is here to see you all the way from Nepal.*)

The daycare centre teaches handicraft and other basic skills to people with intellectual difficulties. Many are adults, and for them it is like going to work every day. The coasters, mats, coffee mugs, napkin holders they make are sold in the facility's gift shop.

In a vocational school for those

# Odd Hoftun, missionary engineer

Norwegian who devoted his life to making Nepal self-reliant in energy dies at age 95

Odd Hoftun, the Norwegian who came to build a mission hospital in Nepal in 1958 and stayed on to develop the country's hydropower died in Norway at age 95 on 14 March.

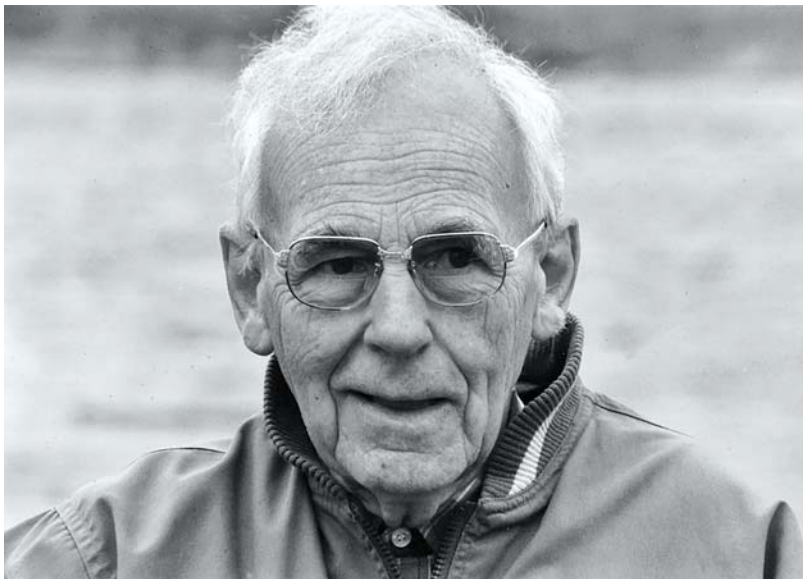
His funeral was held in the town of Tvedestrand on 28 April, and was attended by Norwegian colleagues, including hydropower engineers, academics, friends and relatives.

Hoftun first came to Nepal to work for United Mission Nepal (UMN) and its hospital in Tansen, which the organisation still runs and is a model for community medicine in rural Nepal.

He devoted his life to developing Nepal's indigenous capacity to harness water resources and established Butwal Power Company (BPC) which worked on successively larger hydroelectric projects like Tinau, Andhi Khola and Jhimruk.

Today, BPC is part of a larger consortium of joint Nepali-Norwegian energy companies that built the Khimti project. And it was this step-by-step growth of engineering and energy capacity that Hoftun envisioned 50 years ago: to make Nepal self-reliant, to reduce the risk, and take on even larger projects as the technical capacity of Nepali engineers improved.

"Now you just need to fix your politics, you need a new generation of technocrat politicians



to take charge and move forward," Hoftun told *Nepali Times* in Oslo in 2009 at the launch of his biography, *Kraftverket* ('The Hydropowerplant') which has been translated into English.

Hoftun's life in Nepal had a tragic side: the loss of his anthropologist son Martin in the crash of a Thai International flight from Bangkok to Kathmandu in 1992. The research centre Martin Chautari was established to honour his memory.

Hoftun was a keen observer of Nepali society, and said it was evident even when he first arrived in Nepal that conflict was inevitable. 'Nepal was an innocent

society in those days, but the injustice, the discrimination of the caste system were glaring. It was the neglect of these issues that ultimately led to the upheavals of the 1990s,' he wrote in his book.

A modest and self-effacing man with a frugal lifestyle, he was an ardent follower of the principle of 'small is beautiful' and appropriate technology, believing in a 'bottom-up approach' of empowering rural areas first.

But Hoftun stressed that not all big was bad, and that a country and society have to be ready for big projects to make sure benefits are distributed equitably, while supporting



KUNDA DIXIT

**POWER TO PEOPLE:** Odd Hoftun's son, Eric, delivers a eulogy (above) at his father's funeral in a church in Tvedestrand, Norway on 28 April.

national development. He also thought power export to India was necessary to reduce Nepal's trade deficit, but advised Nepal to build its own industrial base at the same time – advice that is relevant more than ever today.

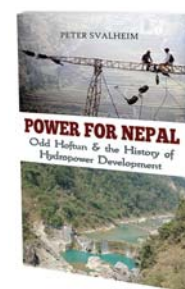
He stayed in Nepal for over 50 years and was involved in setting up several projects, many of them in energy: Butwal

Technical Institute (1964), Tinau Hydropower (1966), Butwal Power Company (1965), Development and Consulting Services (1972), Gobar Gas Company (1978), Andhi Khola Hydropower and Rural Electrification (1982), Himal Hydro (1978), Jhimruk Hydropower (1992), Hydro Lab, Himal Power (1992).

As engineer Bhola Shrestha wrote in a review of Hoftun's book in *Nepali Times* in 2016, 'Hoftun was a pioneer and overcame many obstacles: his own colleagues had a different development philosophy, Nepali trainees misunderstood him, there were many technical challenges in building the first hydropower tunnel in Nepal, and the chronic lack of funds.'

At his funeral, one colleague recalled how, while building Andhi Khola, construction had to stop because the right size turbine could not be sourced. So, Odd Hoftun found a second-hand turbine and had it shipped to Nepal just as the penstock pipe were in place. 🇳🇵

Kunda Dixit



Power for Nepal: Odd Hoftun & the History of Hydropower Development  
By Peter Svalheim, Katherine M. Parent (tr.), Martin Chautari, 2015  
289 pages  
Rs700



# hope to many

A Norwegian girl raised in Gorkha 55 years ago has inspired special needs children in Norway and Nepal to help each other



PHOTOS: KUNDA DIXIT

with special needs in the nearby town of Øvrebø, students had just returned from a visit to the ABBS centre in Nepal, and were excited to share their experience with others.

For the past 12 years, the Øvrebø Blue Cross special vocational school has been sending groups of students to Tulsa Sharma's centres in Nepal and raised funds to support young Nepalis with mental disabilities. Tulsa herself was trained in special needs education at these facilities in Māneglytt and Øvrebø.

The Norwegian students at the centre have faced challenges in their own lives, and the Nepal visits

have had a special impact on their learning and self-worth, says the school's Ingvill Vik Dunsæd, who was also in Nepal with her students earlier this year.

One of them was Monica Kinnapel, who had a drug and alcohol problem as a teenager, and went through one year of rehabilitation before being enrolled at the Øvrebø school, also helping out at the daycare to look after Marianne.

Because of this Nepal connection, she joined a trip to Kathmandu, and says the visit to the ABBS centre transformed her. "I was spoilt, was an egotist and

selfish, but in Nepal I saw how you can be happy. The Nepalis we met were genuine, they taught me to be a nicer person," Kinnapel said.

She is now married, has a baby girl and got a job as a nurse. "I will teach what I learnt in Nepal about life to my children," she said.

Helga Sjøfn had ADHD and remembers how welcoming everyone was at the ABBS centre in Nepal. "I was such a brat before, and I have become a much nicer person. Nepal changed me. It made me more compassionate, and showed me I could also be important for someone else," said Sjøfn. The Nepal experience had



such lasting impact on Sjøfn's life that she rolled up her sleeve to show a 'नमस्ते' tattoo on her wrist.

Vik Dunsæd says these stories of transformation from the students inspired her to take new batches every year to ABBS in Nepal. She and Tulsa both agree that the interactions between Norwegian and Nepali students at ABBS in Kathmandu provides valuable exposure to both.

"We do not go to Nepal to change Nepal, we go there to let Nepal change us," says Vik Dunsæd who is heavily involved in raising money through concerts, bakery sales, lotteries and other events in and around Marianne's hometown of Vennesla.

This is a story of how a couple from a corner of Norway raised a girl in a remote village in Nepal,

and how her life set off a chain reaction, so that many years later people in Norway and Nepal are still helping those with special needs in each other's countries.

Marianne's sister Helen was born in Gorkha, and looked after their father Asbjørn as he struggled with Alzheimer's in a hospice in Vennesla till his death last year. His memory was gone, but he could still speak Nepali.

Besides teaching at university in Norway, Helen is also involved in improving the quality of Nepal's education system and visits Kathmandu often. She is convinced her sister's story is proof of the power of compassion. In fluent Nepali, she says: "For someone who is so dependent on others, Marianne has helped many more become less dependent." 🇳🇵



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# Fashionable, naturally

London-based Nepali designer rewrites the rules of fashion with sustainable designs

■ Shristi Karki

The fashion industry is said to be the second most harmful for the global climate, as many fabrics are petroleum-based, cotton cultivation is water-intensive, most garments are stitched in sweatshops in the Global South, and changing fashion trends are inherently wasteful.

Nepali designer Sanyukta Shrestha is out to change an industry driven by fast fashion. Her sustainable wear has earned her the name, 'Green Goddess' with designs created from fabrics made of bamboo, banana, hemp, organic cotton and wild nettle.

"Our planet faces the interconnected crises of rapid climate change and biodiversity loss, and we have no time to address existential threats to it. There is no planet B," the London-based designer told *Nepali Times* in an email interview. "Sustainable fashion is our future."

Shrestha was 17 years old when she won her very first fashion design award in Nepal. That was 1998, and she could not have known that within twenty years, her designs would be worn by the world's most famous people.

"While I was growing up, the term 'fashion' was not in my dictionary," Shrestha said. "I was completely unaware of the world I got into."

Shrestha had grown up in Nepal at a time when families had a stricter view of what constituted professional success. Her father would rather she became a doctor or engineer, and got a job that would guarantee security.

But she was a creative child, and that eventually turned into a determination that whatever she did would have to be in the arts. Shrestha eventually moved to London, graduated from the London College of Fashion, and in 2011 launched her eponymous sustainable luxury bridal label.



PIERS CUNLIFFE



KEV ELKINS

"My desire has always been to bring out the inner beauty within every woman," says Shrestha. "To do that on the biggest, most important day of a woman's life is truly fulfilling."

By 2012, one of her sustainable couture creations was featured at The Fashion Museum in Bath alongside other renowned designs dating back to the 16th century. Over the next decades, Shrestha's work continued to garner acclaim in the fashion

and entertainment world, reaching red carpets at the Academy Awards, BAFTA awards, as well as the Cannes Film Festival.

But her career path has not been easy, it has taken Shrestha much time and dedication. "It is not for the faint of heart. The process has not been easy, but it has been very rewarding," she added.

Shrestha has sometimes spent up to two years researching a particular fabric and the whole production process to make sure it was

sustainable even before starting to design. And Shrestha's green designs inevitably infuse traditional Nepali fabric and craft. The organic materials are hand-spun and hand-loomed, and are sourced through social organisations in Nepal.

"Nepal is everywhere in my work," Shrestha admitted. "My clients have freedom and comfort when it comes to the design of the dress, but within that dress, they feel Nepal's artisans and rich heritage."

In 2021, Sanyukta Shrestha won the Luxury Award at PETA's 2021 Vegan Wedding Awards. In May 2022, she attended the red carpet at the world premiere of actor Tom Cruise's *Top Gun: Maverick*.

Later that same year, Shrestha, wearing one of her own sustainable creations, met the designer Jean Paul Gaultier at the 2022 Fashion Awards.

She was a keynote speaker for Ahmedabad Design Week 4.0 at Karnavati University in January alongside other global innovators that included design and tech pioneers. Shrestha's solo exhibition, 'The Eco Warrior', was also launched at the Karnavati Literature and Film Festival in February.

In March, Shrestha was shortlisted for the 'Visionary Leadership Award' by the UK's Small Business Awards 2023. And last month she was shortlisted for the 'Wedding Boutique of the Year Award' by Britain's Asian Wedding Awards 2023.

Shrestha also has an eye out for other Nepali fashion and designers on the international stage. She added, "Fashion from Nepal has started to make a mark internationally. I am sure that there will be more amazing talents in the coming years that will make it stand out on the global stage."

 [nepalitimes.com](https://nepalitimes.com)  
More photos online



Connecting Aspirations



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