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Matter of life and debt

Many victims of loan sharks demonstrating in Kathmandu for the past months took high-interest loans that multiplied their debt. But among them are families forced by fraudsters with forged documents to repay money they never borrowed. Here are some of them:

Rajaram Sahani

The Sahani family lives by the highway in Rautahat. Property prices have soared because of the proposed Nijgad airport, and land grabbers target innocent farmers.

One afternoon six years ago, Rajaram was handed a legal notice from the District Court. His neighbour accused him of not paying back a loan of Rs637,000.

"He had gone to court saying I had not paid back a loan I never took, and wanted my land as compensation," Rajaram says.

On examining the court document, Rajaram was astounded: it had his fingerprint. But how?

Rajaram's investigation took him to Bairgania in India where he paid Rs2,000 to make a rubber stamp with his own finger print.

He then got a forensic test done to confirm that although the two prints looked alike, one of them was not of a real thumb.

With this proof, Rajaram returned to the District Police in Rautahat but his neighbour could not be legally detained.

The court formed a 3-member

investigation team which said its lab did not have the equipment to authenticate the print, even though it was the same lab that had told Sahani earlier it was fake.

The District Court judge then ruled Rajaram guilty, and ordered him to pay back capital and interest that had grown to Rs4.83 million.

Rajaram's appeal is sub judice at the Birganj High Court, and he is at the sit-in in the capital.

Ram Ishwor Sahani

The life of Sarlahi fishmonger Ram Ishwor Sahani and his family was irrevocably changed when Naresh Kumar Sahani of Gaur filed a case against his 60-year-old mother Malbhogya Kumari for failing to pay off a loan of Rs2 million.

The plaintiff requested the court to seize Malbhogya's property if she failed to pay the 10% interest on her loan within the next 45 days. Not only had Malbhogya never borrowed any money from Naresh, neither she nor her family had ever met or heard of the loan shark.

Her son suspected that her mother's fingerprints might have been forged, and indeed they were. Lab analysis found the fingerprint on the loan document and Malbhogya's own thumb prints did not match. Naresh successfully filed a petition to withdraw the case without facing any consequences.

Ram Ishwor's mother is elated,

but Ram Ishwor had to take a loan to pay legal fees against collateral of his home. He plans to file a forgery case against Naresh, and is in Kathmandu demanding justice.

Dilli Kumari Karki

Dilli Kumari Karki from Rautahat lost her 11-year-old daughter Akrita to suicide. She blames mental torture the family had to endure from loan sharks.

Seven years ago, Karki borrowed Rs100,000 from a neighbour, Namrata Lama, a local tailor to expand her family's clothing store.

Karki's husband Sukram Basnet also borrowed Rs350,000 from Lama for a cosmetic business. The couple repaid the loans after four months. Later, Lama asked Karki for a blank cheque in her name "just for record-keeping".

Innocently, Karki gave a signed cheque, and Lama told her to make another one because she "signed it incorrectly" the first time.

Soon, Lama started demanding Rs1.5 million, an amount she added herself on the blank cheque. Karki refused saying she had already repaid her loans, but Lama threatened to take her to court.

Fearing prosecution, Karki started borrowing money from other lenders to pay back Lama. But after paying Rs1.5 million, Lama said that was just the "interest" and that Karki still owed the "principle"

which amounted to Rs450,000.

When Karki refused, she brought the other blank cheque to threaten her. So she kept on paying "interest" which has now added up to Rs4.5 million.

When Karki tried to sell the family property to pay for the cancer treatment of her mother-in-law they found that Lama

had forged land ownership documents, forcing them to reach a settlement by paying off another Rs250,000.

Karki then tried to sell her own land to get out of the mess. But the middle men threatened and blackmailed the family in front of the children.

After one such altercation, Karki left for Kathmandu to find money, but heard three days later that Akriti had hung herself in her room.

Lama used to call Karki on multiple numbers but when this reporter tried to contact her, she was never available.

Post-script:

Section 249 'A' of Nepal's Civil Code was amended through an ordinance in May to make unfair transactions punishable by seven years imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs70,000. A replacement bill was passed by parliament in June. But loan shark lobbies close to the JSP have demanded that the bill be repealed, staging counter-protests at Maitighar.

In Rautahat alone, there have been 1,811 loan cases in the last fiscal year, 90% of which involve forgery and misuse of fingerprints.

In May, the government formed an inquiry commission to address victims of loan sharks under Special Court Chair Gauri Bahadur Karki, and 24,000 complaints were submitted. Most of them were from Madhes Province.

Indeed, loan sharks have formed a syndicate in Madhes Province specialising in obtaining fingerprints from official documents and making rubber impressions, forging loan documents, bribing court and forensic officials and obtaining customised lab reports from the National Forensic Science Laboratory in Lalitpur. 🇳🇵

Reporting by: Centre for Investigative Journalism-Nepal, Man Bahadur Basnet, Sagar Chand and Archana Darji.



nepalitimes.com

For longer version of this investigation

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NATUREKNIT
CASHMERE REDEFINED

Inconvenient truths

On 13 July, 117 young Nepalis all with valid documents to work in Kuwait were turned back at Kathmandu airport immigration. Nearly half of them were women, and had boarding passes.

Their labour permits from one department of government were not accepted by another.

A few days earlier, 156 workers flying to Kuwait and Jordan were similarly stopped by airport immigration. In both instances, other passengers with exactly the same documents were allowed to board while they were not.

These are not one-off cases: kickbacks and payoffs have become such a part of life in this country that the English word 'setting' has entered the Nepali lexicon to describe collusion between unscrupulous businesses, bureaucrats and politicians.

It is when someone somewhere has not been paid off by a recruiting agency that Nepali migrant workers are stopped at the airport.

A record 800,000 Nepalis left the country to work abroad in fiscal year 2022-23 that ended on Monday. And that was just the total for those that obtained labour permits from the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE), and did not include those who went to India, Australia, Canada or Japan.

Nepal still has a functioning economy because of the money those Nepalis send home. Remittances through official channels grew 27% this fiscal year to hit \$8.6 billion. A similar amount probably also came through informal transfers.

Nearly one-third of Nepal's GDP is made up of remittances. Yet, the poorest and most desperate Nepalis are harassed every step of the way in their own country before they get to their destination, where they are exploited some more.

Nepal now has a different type of migration: youth leaving for higher studies in Canada, Australia, Japan, the United States and the UK but many of these are essentially emigrants out to also work and earn money.

Push factors are many, but one of them is the poor quality of higher education. And there are not enough jobs for graduates. But the government also makes it as difficult as possible for them to leave.

Nepalis paying their way to foreign universities need a No Objection Certificate (NOC) before flying out. There are long queues at the department issuing these documents, many applicants are rejected because the university they are applying for does not exist on the NOC list. But there is always a way: 'brokers' will fix the papers for a fee, and everyone gets their cut.

Once they come back (if they ever return) the students have another mammoth hurdle to cross: obtaining an equivalency certificate from Tribhuvan University's ambitiously named Centre for Curriculum Development for their degrees so they can find jobs in Nepal. Most get the go-around for years, eventually give up and emigrate for good.

Astha Dahal, a Kathmandu-based lawyer with a PhD in criminology from the University of Cambridge who also writes a monthly column for this paper on the judiciary, was refused equivalency by Tribhuvan University on flimsy grounds.

The Nepali state makes it difficult, and often impossible, for an honest citizen to get a citizenship certificate, national ID, passport, PAN number, driving license. Citizens have to pay a bribe to deposit their taxes — no

wonder the government has a revenue shortfall. It is as if politicians and bureaucrats are not there to serve, but to rule.

These plutocrats actively discourage people from obtaining any official document or paper, unless there is cash under the table.

This is the true hallmark of an apathetic state devoid of accountability. Impunity for crimes committed by the highest in the land means that corruption trickles down the state machinery.

Those seeking services are scolded rudely, herded like goats, humiliated, and treated as if they are asking for a favour. A citizenship bill is passed, but single mothers are still treated as if they are invisible. The Supreme Court orders registration of same-sex marriage, but gay couples cannot register nuptials because bureaucrats see a problem with the wording of the law.

Despite federalism, or maybe because of it, the rot has seeped down to local governments. Our kleptocracy makes rules just so they are difficult for those seeking services, paperwork is made needlessly complex, and has to be rubber stamped in a labyrinth of rooms. This leaves an opening for middlemen on their payroll and can facilitate the process for a fee.

It is difficult to find a formula to get out of this rut. Our only hope is in the new crop of elected representatives in Parliament who want to clean things up. Investigations into the Lalita Niwas and fake refugee scandals also offer hope that check and balances in Nepal's democracy are functioning.

But the priority should be an immediate cleaning up of the state machinery. Government of Nepal: ask not what your citizens can do for you, but what you can do for your citizens.



Instead of making things easy for its citizens, the Nepali state excels at putting up obstacles every step of the way

ONLINE PACKAGES



Loan sharks are preying on the poorest Nepalis and putting them into debt. But among the victims are also families who are being forced by fraudsters with forged documents to repay money never borrowed. Full story on Page 1, and watch the video on our YouTube channel.



For generations, men from Western Nepal have crossed over the border to India to work as apple pickers, porters, domestic help or security guards. Now with better connectivity they no longer have to leave the country, instead they migrate to the capital for work. Read story on page 10-11.



Be a part of the reconstruction of Patan Darbar Square's temples and monuments after the 2015 earthquake. Discover how woodcarvers, metal craft artists, masons and architects are all hard at work to revive the traditional temples and heritage in this video. Read profile of a new book depicting heritage reconstruction post 2015 earthquake on page 6-7.

VEGAN FOOD

I will have to check out this book ('Nepali Vegan', Sahina Shrestha, #1170). But honestly, I think the Nepali food that we mostly cook at home is vegan if you replace ghee with olive or coconut oil.

Agnostic Girl

I cannot wait to get a copy. Being vegan in Nepal or eating Nepali food does not have to be hard at all! I did a cooking course in Samakhushi recently and it was delicious.

T Teacher

Highly educational. Although I am a 'blue blooded' Newa living in Kathmandu valley since many generations, I was not aware that most of the food that we savour on sort of daily basis are vegan

Ratna Sansar Shrestha

AVIATION SAFETY

Nothing new about aircraft flying into mountains in Nepal ('Keeps happening', Editorial, #1170). It will keep happening, regardless of commissions, committees until pilots decide not to fly into low visibility conditions. It is just that simple.

Roger Ray

'Don't fly into clouds': that is an important message to all aviators in Nepal.

Ben-Erik Ness

Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING

Amik and Tilak

by Tilak Bahadur Tamang and Amik Singh Lama
Tilak and Amik, two Nepali former employees of McDonald's in Saudi Arabia spoke with Nepali Times about starting their own burger chain in Nepal. Read about their journey on www.nepalitimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Keeps happening

Editorial
There have been at least 18 chopper crashes killing 98 people in the past 60 years in Nepal. The rule for pilots in Nepal must be: do not fly into clouds, they have rocks in them. Read the editorial online.

Most popular on Twitter

Nepali vegan

by Sahina Shrestha
Plant-based Himalaya: Vegan Recipes from Nepal, A new book by Babita Shrestha, takes Nepali recipes to the world and shows that vegan does not have to be boring or bland. Read article and view photos at nepalitimes.com.

Most commented



Kingdom lost, republic gained

by Sonia Awale
Much like in his previous book, author Sagar SJB Rana gives an insider look at post Rana-era Nepal and relives the political and physical landmarks along Nepal's tumultuous road to democracy spanning 70 years in his sequel, Kingdom Lost. Join discussion online.

Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Geologists have known that it was a debris flow on the Seti that formed #Pokhara Valley, but a recent paper in @Nature has for the first-time described just how cataclysmic this event was and that it could happen again. Pokhara 800 years ago | @kundadixit

Anup @AnupSubedee
Amazing stuff. Thanks for the explanation @kundadixit

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Thoughtfully designed with mouth-watering food photography, Plant-based Himalaya: Vegan Recipes from Nepal, is a visual treat even for those who are not interested in cooking.

Manjushree Thapa @manjushreethapa
For all the vegans out there. This book looks amazing.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
While listening to some audio recordings, it becomes clear that he (Tek Nath Rimal) may have unwittingly assisted the criminals under the misguided belief that it would benefit genuine refugees, writes Buddha Mani Dhakal.

AASHISH LAMICHHANE @ashishmanipkr
Hope he gets justice soon.

1,000 WORDS



DR S JAISHANKAR TWEET

SHAKE IT: Nepal's Foreign Minister NP Saud with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar on the corridors of the BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok on 18 July. Jaishankar tweeted: "Looking forward to remaining in touch."

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Leave Children Out Of It

During the peak of the 10-year-long Maoist conflict, children were often collateral damage. Apart from recruiting child soldiers, the Maoists strategically targeted schools and closed them down. They said the education system needed to be overhauled.

Twenty years down the line, a Maoist is prime minister for the third time, but the education system has not improved. The disparity between the public and private institutions is bigger than ever before. And when the state does intervene, it does for all the wrong reasons

Excerpts of the report published on issue #154 18-24 July 2003:

Hemanta Bhandari is a nine-year-old boy who walks 10km roundtrip to a private school in Ghorahi everyday from his village. He has a heavy school bag that he slings across his head porter-style, and he is sweating and tired by the time he reaches his class. "I wish I lived in Ghorahi, so I wouldn't have to walk this far every day," Hemanta tells a visitor.

There are hundreds of thousands of children all over Nepal who have always walked long distances to school. But these distances have suddenly become longer for children because the Maoists have forced the closure of private



schools in their home village. Hemanta's old school in Guruwagau shut down for good after Maoist threats and extortion.

But now, parents and guardians of children in Dang are fighting back. They are

tired of waiting for the government to do anything, so they got together to open some of the schools that the Maoists closed down in towns across the Dang valley last year. After the ceasefire, the parents had successfully helped open schools but in the past months the Maoist student unions have again started visiting school after school making demands that are impossible for many educators to fulfil.

The Maoists now seem defensive about targeting schools. Parents' outrage over the prolonged closure of schools has now boiled over, and the simultaneous re-opening of some schools is the first sure sign that the tide may be turning because of public opinion.

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

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Weaving the fabric of a new life

A Nepali couple's life-long struggle to run a thriving hand-woven dhaka business

■ **Sahina Shrestha** in Palpa

Palpa is famous for its Dhaka weaves, but Pabi Sara Rajali did not know this when she first ran away from home to come here more than 20 years ago. From a Magar household, she did not even speak Nepali.

She had grown up in the mountains, herding livestock, fetching firewood, doing household chores. She often wondered what the outside world looked like and wanted to earn money to escape her little village.

A cousin worked as a weaver in Tansen and proposed to take Pabi Sara with her. Her parents opposed the idea, so she ran away.

Life in the bustling market town was different from her mountain village. She not only had to learn to weave, but also a new language. But with her cousin's help, she quickly picked up both. "It wasn't an easy job, but at least I had some money of my own," remembers Pabi Sara. "In my village, I didn't even get to see money, here I could wear what I wanted and eat what I wanted."

Pabi Sara met Chandra Bahadur Rajali, who worked as a technician at the weaving centre. He had come from Gulmi at the age of 12 to spin threads and worked his way up to weave and fix machines. They got married in 1999, and a year later, their first daughter was born.

But their combined salaries were not enough to provide for the family of three. So, while Pabi Sara continued weaving, Chandra Bahadur took up a construction job. But that did not pay well either, and they opened a butcher shop in the



bazar. Even that did not work out.

So, Chandra Bahadur decided to try his luck abroad. He took a loan and went to Saudi Arabia. The earnings there were not as good as expected, and the work in the desert was hard. In three years there, Chandra Bahadur saved just enough to pay back the loan to his recruiter. "I thought that I'd be able to make the same money at home while living with my family, so I came back," he says.

In Palpa, he went back to working at the dhaka factory again. He realised that because so many young men had migrated for work,

there was a labour shortage and wages had improved. The fabric that had been a part of Nepal's national dress had started gaining popularity and the demand for Palpali dhaka had surged.

Dhaka fabric originated in southeast Asia and came to Nepal through then East Bengal during the British days, which is why it is still called 'dhaka'. Experts have traced the patterns and colours of Nepali dhaka to Bangladeshi jamdani dhakai. The dhaka tradition in Palpa can be traced to

STRIKING
ROOTS

the late 1950s when Ganesh Man Maharjan traveled to Dhaka where he saw saris made from the muslin. He learned the process and set up the first factory in Tansen. The fabric became emblematic of the country's identity when King Mahendra made it mandatory in the 1960s for government officials to wear dhaka topi.

After 17 years of weaving dhaka for others, the couple decided to strike off on their own. Today, Pabi Sara and Chandra Bahadur's New Sangharsha Dhaka Udhyog is one of

the 32 small-scale dhaka businesses in Palpa. They borrowed money, bought a plot of land, and struck a deal with a factory owner who was closing down and bought five of his jacquard looms. "Getting the looms was not enough, we needed stands, threads, and that too added to the cost," says Pabi Sara.

They named their company Sangarsha Dhaka Udhyog, a nod to the many struggles they had in life. But the struggle was not over: while both had the weaving and mechanical skills, they did not know enough about management.

In 2016, Pabi Sara got selected



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FATF Grey List



The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) that combats international money-laundering has kept Nepal out of its Grey List for now, giving it more time to fix laws and implement them. Nepal Rastra Bank Governor Maha Prasad Adhikari led a 28-member team to Canada for a hearing of FATF's Asia Pacific Group (APG) last week and convinced officials to give Nepal till October 2024 to introduce legislation.

EU support

The European Union has announced support for Nepal's agriculture and rural development program with Rs5 billion since 2019 as well as the school sector development program with Rs11.3 billion since 2016 with also the



involvement of Finland. Meanwhile, the government's agriculture development strategy was brought to provincial and local levels with the EU-funded technical assistance team and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development.



Turkish cargo

Turkish cargo has ranked third among air cargo carriers in the world according to monthly data published by the International Air Transport Association (IATA). Turkish Airlines increased its cargo tonnage by 17% this month.

Himalaya help

Himalaya Airlines has enabled internet booking for tickets through eSewa, MasterCard and Visa Card, as well as for refunds. Passengers can pre-book baggage, select preferred seats, choose in-flight meals, reserve lounge access, and check-in online. Details are on www.himalaya-airlines.com.



The carrier has also handed over a two-ton air conditioner to Nepal Orthopedic Hospital as part of its ongoing effort to support Nepal's health sector since the Covid pandemic.

Women's football team

Unilever Nepal has been announced as the new sponsor of Nepal's National Women's football team, with the multinational giant saying it plans to work with ANFA.



New BMW

Laxmi Premium Motors, the importer and distributor of BMW vehicles in Nepal, has launched the BMW iX3 Electric SAV. The EV has a high-voltage capacity of 80 KWh and a charging time of 34 minutes. Vehicles can be booked at Laxmi's Tinkune Centre.

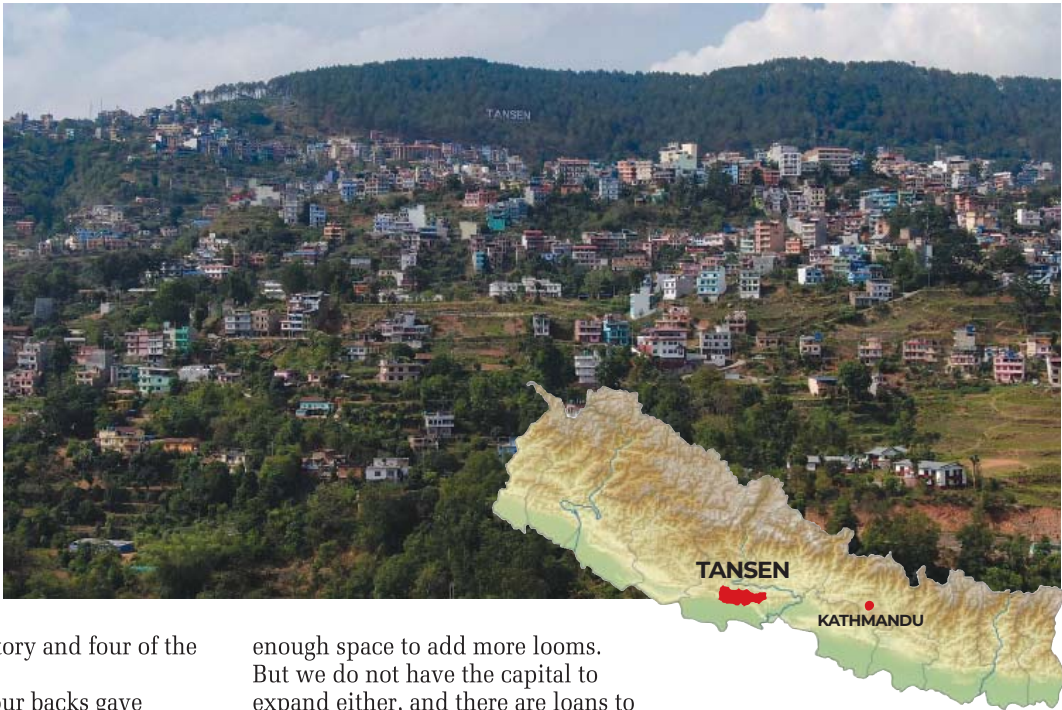


Berger winners

Rupesh Dhungana from Itahari won a Sony 75-inch LED tv and Bhup Poudel and Shiv Nandwala won a 345 litre refrigerator under Berger Paints Nepal's Berger Offer. Other prizes included Samsung smartphones, smartwatches, and washing machines.

Global IME branch

Global IME bank has opened new branches at Swayambhu and Balkumari, expanding their services in the Kathmandu valley.



ALL PHOTOS: GOPEN RAI

for the Women Rural Enterprise Acceleration Project where she learnt the basics of running a business and was among the top five entrepreneurs in the district. Things were slowly starting to look up for the couple.

Before the pandemic hit, they expanded to 11 looms and even set up a showroom in the bazar. But the factory remained closed during the lockdowns, so did the showroom and they faced severe losses. Then a landslide damaged

a part of the factory and four of the looms.

“It felt like our backs gave out,” recalls Pabi Sara. The couple did not have the money to pay interest on their loans or taxes to the government. They decided to shut down for good. “We went around asking for help from the municipality and government offices but maybe because we are small people with no political connections no one listened to us,” says Chandra Bahadur. Desperate, the couple sold corn and other vegetables by the highway, carrying the sacks on their backs.

When the world started getting back to normal in 2021, they renovated the shed and registered the company again. Things seem to be finally falling into place, and they now employ seven women on six looms and sell everything they produce from the factory itself. On average, the company has a turnover of Rs200,000 a month.

“There is a huge demand for dhaka in the market but we have not been able to meet it,” says Chandra Bahadur. “We don’t have

enough space to add more looms. But we do not have the capital to expand either, and there are loans to pay off.”

While uncertain about financing, the couple is confident about the quality of their weaves. The thinner and tighter the threads, the better the design and quality of the fabrics, and Pabi Sara makes sure the weavers all hit hard to make firm knots. Since they have risen up the ranks themselves, they know that happy workers make better products, and take good care of the staff. Rambha Devi Saru was one of the first women to join the company ten years ago. She learned to weave from Pabi Sara herself, and has been working with the couple ever since. Her husband worked in Malaysia and is now in Saudi Arabia. “I was just wasting my time at home. But since I started working here, I feel like I am contributing to the household as well. It makes me happy,” says Rambha.

Pabi Sara empathises with that and is pleased she can help other women gain financial independence. “If I had just turned

to my husband to provide for me, I wouldn’t be where I am today. So I encourage them to join us. We want to help them in any way we can,” she says.

She adds, “We want to scale up and hopefully create a sustainable business. If one day, our daughters decide that they don’t want to work for someone else, I want them to at least have this business to fall back on.” 🇳🇵



Come along to Palpa where Pabi Sara Rajali and her husband Chandra Bahadur weave the famous Palpa dhaka in their small cottage industry. Listen to how the couple got started on their entrepreneurial journey.

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RESTORATION OF A KING

The cover of *Monuments of the Kathmandu Valley: Before & After the 2015 Earthquake* has the dramatic and hitherto unpublished photograph (right) of Patan Darbar Square while the temple structures were coming down in a cloud of brown dust.

The image was taken by James Kirk at exactly 11:56 on 25 April 2015, and shows the 350-year-old bronze statue of King Yognarendra Malla falling from its pedestal as flocks of frightened pigeons circle above the dust cloud.

Kirk took another photo at 12:33. By then the dust has settled, and the statue is lying on its side, with a 'top-less' South Taleju in the background. There is already someone trying to dig through the rubble of the Hari Narayan temple to rescue people trapped underneath.

King Yognarendra Malla's statue was damaged, but looks as if it is kneeling in prayer (far, right). The face did not even have a scratch.

The king and his consorts were repaired and consecrated on top of the column in 2017. Even the gilded copper bird finial, which was lost and miraculously found was replaced on top of the serpent.



Rebuilding better

Rohit Ranjitkar's book is a pictorial documentation of the restoration of Kathmandu's monuments after the 2015 earthquake



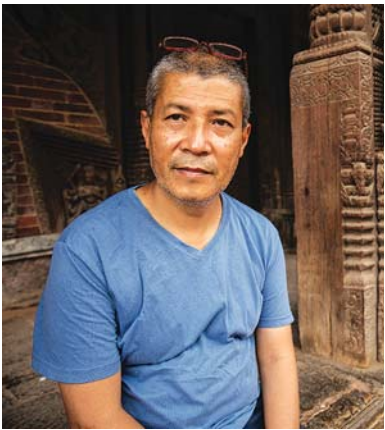
■ Kunda Dixit

Who better than Rohit Ranjitkar, Nepal's foremost heritage architect, to put together this voluminous documentation of the repair, restoration and rebuilding of Kathmandu Valley's monuments after the 2015 earthquake.

Monuments of the Kathmandu Valley: Before & After the 2015 Earthquake is a sort of post mortem of how the historic temples, shrines, monasteries, stupas, rest houses and Rana palaces were rebuilt from the ground up – with both good and bad examples.

But it is a tribute to Ranjitkar and his colleagues that restoration has been sensitively done, reusing salvaged material, and employing modern items only when necessary for structural purposes. Cement was not used, and stainless steel dowels only inserted inside stone columns to make them safe.

Ranjitkar is director of the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT), and within minutes of the earthquake at 11:56 on 25 April 2015, he was out on Patan



Darbar Square, helping rescue not just those trapped under the rubble but also mobilising Patan's community to carry valuable stone carvings, wooden columns and fallen bronze idols for safekeeping in the nearby Patan Museum.

In the week after the earthquake, he stopped Nepal Army bulldozers from clearing the debris from the 12th century Hari Shankar temple and the 400-year-old Char Narayan temple so items could be retrieved.

Many of these were classified and restored to the exact place on





ter than before



REINCARNATION

The Charnarayan temple built in 1566 in Patan Darbar Square collapsed in a cloud of dust (far left).

The first photograph by Suresh Lakhe taken at 12:01 shows the square engulfed in dust. Five minutes later, people are standing at the centre of the square as the ground swayed, and structures collapsed around them. Pigeons wheeled overhead.

The last photo taken in 2019 shows the temple meticulously restored by KVPT from the foundation up, using local material like yellow mud mortar, and traditional building techniques.



the temples. In the store room of Patan Museum were artifacts from the 1934 earthquake which were also put back in their right places.

Destructive earthquakes happen every 80 years or so in Nepal and this allows the skills, craft and knowledge of restoration to pass from one generation to the next. This book is a part of that tradition.

Ranjitkar provides numerous examples of damaged wooden struts and tympanum that were replaced, repaired, and missing pieces recarved from scratch.

The 625-page volume is lavishly illustrated with photographs and drawings of the reconstruction process. This makes the book itself a treasure house of information.

High on top of the Taleju in Patan, KVPT did not just rebuild the titled cupola but corrected faulty reconstruction after 1934.

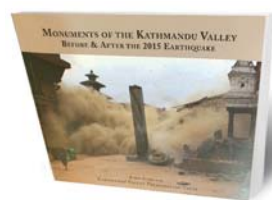
The book includes details of the rebuilding of the Machhindranath Temple in Bungmati, the Indrayani Temple (left) built in 1792, Kasthamandap, Boudhanath stupa.

In Bhaktapur, Ranjitkar shows how a watercolour painting by Henry Ambrose Oldfield in 1853 was used to restore the west façade

of the Malati Chok not only to pre-2015, not even pre-1934 but to its original design in the 19th century.

Monuments of the Kathmandu Valley does not just feature the restoration of Malla-era structures, but also former Rana palaces that now serve as government buildings like Singha Darbar, Rastra Bank, Harihar Bhavan or Keshar Mahal.

Ranjitkar gives examples of mistakes like the 1832 Lagan Silkhana that was demolished after damage. We are sure there are many other examples of how restoration could have been done better, but this book is mostly about the ones well done. 🇳🇵



*Monuments of the Kathmandu Valley:
Before & After the 2015 Earthquake*

Achievement in Seven Years

by Rohit Ranjitkar

Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust, 2023

+977 1 5523212

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EVENTS



Cultural Dance Show

Yog Movie Gardens’ cultural dance show in its outdoor seating area will be accompanied with good food and plenty of drinks. Call for details.
21 July, 7pm-9pm, Yog Movie Garden, Paknajol, 9843624361

Recipe Workshop

Experience Paris right in Kathmandu. Join the workshop to master the art of Moelleux au Chocolat.
21 July, 2pm-4pm, Rs350-400, Alliance Française Kathmandu, Pulchowk

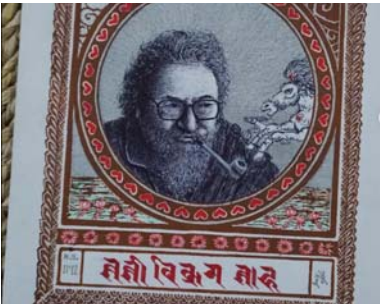


Yoga Workshop

Learn complex asanas from master yoga trainer RH Thapa during the 15-day yoga course aimed towards improving strength, flexibility, and overall well-being.
23 July, 7am-9am, Yogmandu Yoga, Mid-Baneshwor

The Wheel

Experience the captivating journey of life and struggle through The Wheel, a transformative play that will leave the viewer pondering the beauty and challenges of existence.
20-30 July, 4pm-5pm, Mandala Theatre, Thapagaun (01) 5245147



Art Exhibition

See artist Aman Maharjan’s collection of works, titled ‘A Homage’, which will be on exhibit for a month.
Until 15 August, 11am-7pm, Dalai-la Art Space, Thamel

DINING



Wine Bar

Spend quiet evenings at South Side Wine Bar with its curated selection of more than 20 different wines served with Panini (Grilled Sandwich) and cheese platters.
Gyanmandala, Jhamsikhel, 9861119954

MUSIC

Pop-Rock Camp

Join KJC’s four-day music camp catered to all, from budding musicians, to seasoned performers to avid lovers of pop and rock music.
25-28 July, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel (01)5443554/9813556945



The Elements

Catch a live performance from The Elements this weekend with an opening act by Karan Joshi.
27 July, 5pm onwards, Lavie Garden, Phulbari Road



Robin Tamang tribute

Three bands – Abhaya and the Steam Engines, Cobweb, and Anuprastha – come together to celebrate the enduring musical legacy of the late Robin Tamang.
21 July, 6pm onwards, Club Fahrenheit, Thamel



Guitar Workshop

Attend a guitar workshop and masterclass by international blues artist Ashesh Dangol. Get tickets to the workshop at Ticket Sanjal.
22 July, 3pm onwards, Rs500-700, Kaleidoscope Music Academy, Putalisadak

Underground Garage Party

Dance the night away to pulsating beats of electronic dance music curated and prepared by DJ BPM, Manshi, Rednus and Anil.
21 July, 7pm onwards, Rs999, Kathmandu Marriott Hotel, 9801228992

New Orleans Café

Choose from a wide selection of foods and beverages and dine in the quiet garden courtyard of New Orleans Café in the heart of the city. Live music on Fridays and Saturdays.
Thamel (01) 4700736



Thistle Triangle

Thistle’s special Peri Peri wings and triple chicken feast is not to be missed. Any item from the restaurant’s Eurasian menu is a treat.
Matighar Mandala Bhawan (01) 4101740

About Town

GETAWAY



Sarangkot Mountain Lodge

Views from the Sarangkot Mountain Lodge are even more mesmerising during monsoon. Visitors also get complimentary dinner upon booking a stay at this bed and breakfast. Call for reservations.
Sarangkot, Pokhara, 9851208769/9851331247

The Old Inn

Escape the city and travel to this cosy bed and breakfast offering scenic views of Annapurna, Langtang, and more. Experience Bandipur’s traditional Newa architecture.
Bandipur, Tanahu (065) 520110



Shivapuri Heights Cottage

Shivapuri Heights Cottage’s day package includes a dip in the plunge pool and a two-course meal with a view of Kathmandu Valley spread below. Massage therapy and use of the hot tub are also available. Call for details.
Shivapuri hills, 9846232271

Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge

Get up close and personal with nature as you enter the heart of Chitwan National Park. Immerse yourself into the local Tharu culture as you experience village life, the beauty of the jungle and the diverse wildlife.
Kawasoti, Nawalparasi (07) 8690721



Hotel Moonlight

Situated on the outskirts of Thamel, Hotel Moonlight offers visitors a respite from the busy city. Relax in the deluxe rooms and grab a hearty meal at the beautiful garden-side restaurant.
Paknajol (01) 4380452



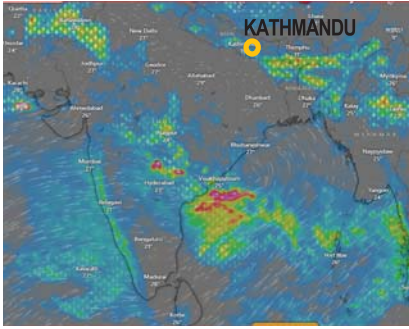
Sapporo Japanese

Experience authentic Japanese food and drinks at Sapporo, a restaurant known for homemade fresh noodles, ramen, udon, soba and more.
Anamika Marg, Baluwatar, 9803445405

Cibo Bistro

Enjoy a wide variety of pastas, pizzas, sandwiches and mouth-watering desserts made with fresh ingredients. Kid-friendly dining options are also available.
Pulchowk (01)5541940

WEEKEND WEATHER



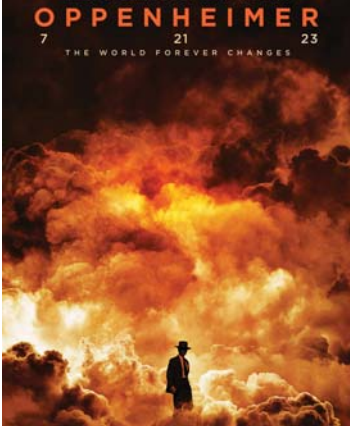
FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
 29° 21°	 29° 20°	 29° 20°	 28° 20°	 28° 20°

Making up for lost time

A monsoonal circulation over the Nepal Himalaya changed wind direction, and moisture-laden cloud descended from the Tibetan Plateau. The colder temperature at higher altitudes mixed with warm and moist air brought scattered heavy downpours over Kathmandu Valley. This trend will continue over the next few days, but with bright sunshine, especially in the mornings. Total rainfall so far in central Nepal is back to normal, but Madhes Province is still getting only half average precipitation, seriously affecting paddy planting.

OUR PICK

Arguably the most awaited film of the year, Oppenheimer is the story of an American theoretical physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer and his role in the development of the atomic bomb. The historical drama delves into the inner workings of the Manhattan Project during World War II which produced the first nuclear weapons, its aftermath and Oppenheimer’s association with the Communist Party. In its limited premiere, the biographical drama has already garnered rave reviews, with many calling it director Christopher Nolan’s magnum opus. There is already Oscar buzz for its direction, background score and the cast that includes Cillian Murphy as Oppenheimer himself, Emily Blunt, Matt Damon, Robert Downey Jr. and Florence Pugh.



MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



सर्पदंश (सर्पको टोकाइ) बाट बच्न...

- घर वरिपरि सर्प लुक्न सक्ने सम्भावित स्थानको खोजी गरी त्यस्ता ठाउँहरूको व्यवस्थापन गरौं ।
- घर वरिपरि सफा राखौं, प्वालहरू टालौं ।
- खुला स्थानमा शौच नगरौं ।
- खाली खुट्टा नहिँडौं, जुत्ता वा गम्बुट लगाऔं, लट्टी लिएर हिँडौं ।
- सम्भव भएसम्म खाटमा सुतौं ।
- सुत्दा झुलको अनिवार्य प्रयोग गरौं ।
- सुत्ने वेलामा ओछ्यान राम्ररी हेरौं ।
- राती हिँड्दा टर्चको प्रयोग गरौं ।
- पराल, दाउरा आदि निकाल्दा होशियारी अपनाऔं ।



नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड

Nepali family spread across Kuwait, Cyprus, UAE



HOME AND FAMILY: Tsering Lama and her son, Pemba hose rescue under the rubble of a collapsed building she watched on tv while working as a maid in Kuwait in 2015. Tsering and her daughter who went to Cyprus, and the youngest in UAE.



Two generations of a migrant family are yet to break out of the cycle of poverty

This is the 38th instalment of Diaspora Diaries, a regular series in Nepali Times with stories of Nepalis living and working abroad.

Tsering Lama: I was working as a domestic help in Kuwait when the earthquake struck Nepal in April 2015. My heart sank, and I was worried about the four children back home. Between frantic calls and silent prayers, I was also watching videos on YouTube. One of them showed destroyed buildings and the miracle rescue of a boy from under the rubble after being trapped for five days in Gonga Bu bus park. He turned out to be my own son, Pemba. My son was now on a video of my phone screen, being carried on a stretcher by rescue workers amidst cheers. I wept uncontrollably. I would later find out that the other three of my children were also safe.

It was for them that I had come to work in Kuwait. Without the support of my husband or other family members, even providing food to my children had become difficult. I had already failed the

eldest two who had run away from home. The younger two were headed down the same path if I did not earn for them. So I left for Kathmandu with a new passport and a heavy heart. I was lucky to get the job as a domestic worker in Kuwait without paying a recruitment fee. I did not know about Kuwait except that it was bidesh and I could earn.

The first employer was abusive. Their children were my children's age, but they also mistreated me. A slight delay in obeying their order for a glass of water was met with taunts and rudeness. I felt suffocated and ran away. The agency there placed me in a new household, and this time I was lucky. I stuck with the employer for five years, picked up Arabic. My job was in the kitchen with five other domestics like myself. Every weekend, the workforce would expand to 20 because the children of the employer would come with their own nannies: Filipinos, Indians, Sri Lankan and Nepali. They ran after babies and mopped the floors as the family enjoyed the weekends.

Meanwhile, my own children were growing up on their own back home in Nepal. I had to reassure myself that my sacrifice ensured that they went to bed on a full stomach. When the earthquake hit, long distance parenting made me feel even more distant from my children. I was not around when my boy was in the darkness of the collapsed building, silently fighting for his life.

Pasang Lama: As the eldest, I had three siblings to take care of while my mother was away in Kuwait. The youngest two were obedient, but my brother Pemba is a different breed. He came and went as he

pleased from our rented room. He worked in a hotel at the bus park at Gonga Bu and was used to a carefree lifestyle and friends that we did not approve of. When the earthquake struck, I was worried but comforted myself thinking he is street smart and would keep himself safe. My other two siblings and I traveled to Kavre for safety, while Pemba was out of touch.

In Kavre, we were glued to the news and to our surprise, we saw our brother Pemba being carried out on a stretcher from underneath the ruins of the hotel. Later I would find out that he and his friend Ramesh were just about to have lunch when the eight story building came crashing down. My brother was trapped in a crouching position for five days before he was rescued. Ramesh's legs had been crushed and had to be amputated.

I wept uncontrollably. Shortly after seeing him on the news, I received a call from Chhauni Army Hospital and rushed over. I was shaken, but once I met my brother who was resting and recovering, I realised nothing had changed. Even in that state, he refused to wear the clothes and shoes I had brought him as they were not of his choice. We started bickering, forgetting that he just had a miraculous rescue.

I used to top the class in school, but had to quit in Grade 8 because I had to help my mother. There was no point studying, we were hungry all the time. How could I justify buying a textbook if I could use the same money to buy cooking oil or rice for the family? When you struggle to pay for pencils or shoes, you start losing the motivation to study. After I dropped out, every other person in my village would ask me why I quit despite being a bright student. I used to be put off by that question, and hid

whenever I saw classmates. I came to Kathmandu and started earning money painting thankas.

We managed household expenses from the money I made from painting thanka and the cash my mother sent us. Since I had a job, I had to train my sister to do the household chores. We somehow got by even though my father was present, but always absent, and a mother who tried to be present despite her absence.

We never saved anything, so I also started thinking about migrating for work. I paid Rs400,000 to an agent to take me to Cyprus for a domestic job earning 400 euros a month. Working in someone else's house takes away your freedom in ways that can feel uncomfortable because you are always under scrutiny. Words and actions that are frowned upon in a professional workplace become normal within the walls of a home. There is no distinction between professional and personal aspects of life, such as work hours or overtime benefits. I later worked at a clinic and realised the tradeoff. When you are living on your own, you are not watched constantly, but then you have to pay for your own food, rent, electricity. After working in Cyprus for over five years, I decided it was time to return. I had unfinished business in Nepal.

Tsering Lama: I came home to Nepal from Kuwait for a two-month break but ended up not returning because of Covid. To be honest, I would probably still return if my age was not a factor, since I could do with the extra money. For now I have started a small khaja ghar eatery in Kathmandu, and make enough money to survive.

My girls took over from me doing housework. I passed on my

responsibilities to my daughter when I went to Kuwait. My eldest daughter then passed on these responsibilities to my younger daughter to travel to Cyprus for work. And now my youngest daughter is in the UAE where she is working as a receptionist. This is the struggle and reality of a Nepali family these days. Still, we have not been able to break out of the cycle of poverty, and I am not getting any younger.

My youngest boy is a novice at a monastery and I take solace in the fact that he is under proper guidance and close to God. But I worry about Pemba, my miracle boy. He wants to travel overseas but it has not worked out yet. All I have is a little jewelry that I am willing to sell for his recruitment fee. I want to see him settle down and be financially stable. He survived miraculously, but is still lost and struggling in a world that was not ready to see him go.

Pasang Lama: My hunger for learning did not end even though I had to quit studies because of my circumstances. I saved some money from our work overseas and returned to Nepal in April which I am investing in education. Fourteen years after dropping out of grade 8, I am now preparing for my SEE. There was a time when studying felt like reaching out for the stars given my background. I am proud of myself for beating the odds.

I ran away from my village so I would not have to explain why I quit school. But there was no escaping from myself. I have learnt a lot from the practical work I did in Cyprus, which will serve me well, but I still have a yearning for education. 🇳🇵

Translated from a conversation in Nepali.



Turkish Airlines Click2Win

The cycling event of the year, the annual Kora Cycling Challenge sponsored by Turkish Airlines took place on 15 July last week. A total of 3,886 cyclists participated from 20 different locations across Nepal and a few locations from around the world. A record 34% of the registrants in the Kathmandu edition were female riders. Collectively, participants rode close to 200,000 km during the event.

Kora Cycling Challenge this year was also a charity event to raise funds to rebuild eastern Turkey which was hit badly in the

7.M earthquake on 6 February earlier this year that affected 9.1 million people, displaced 3 million and completely destroyed nearly 300,000 buildings.

But while the first part of the Kora Cycling Challenge is over, riders and accompanying photographers can send in three pictures each from the event to click2win@mykorachallenge.com and participate in Turkish Airlines Click2Win. Photos with the most likes on Facebook will be the winner and receive a return ticket to Turkiye, among other prizes to be won.

“Nepalis learn and earn from Israel”



Hanan Goder is serving his second tenure as Israel’s ambassador to Nepal, and is passionate about agriculture. **Nepali Times** interviewed Goder this week at a dairy farm in Gokarna started by a returnee from Israel (page 5). Excerpts:

Nepali Times: What is so special about the Learn and Earn scheme?
Ambassador Hanan Goder: The idea is to send young people to Israel for 11 months during which they spend five days a week on the job training in Israeli farms and one day in college for theoretical knowledge. When they come back, they bring earnings, knowledge, but most of all the culture of work.
Some 60% of Nepalis are involved in farming. Israel on the other hand has only 2% workforce in agriculture, but it produces for the rest 98% and even exports. There is no magic involved, we are proud to share our knowledge and ideas with Nepal. Agriculture is not a hobby, it’s a business, a profession and a way of life. You have to invest before you can reap benefits. Traditional subsistence agriculture has no future. Farming has to be modern and more productive.

What did you mean by Nepalis also learning the work culture in Israel?
They learn to start their day early and end it late, in contrast to villages here in Nepal where men are hardworking but not as productive, they are often busy playing board games while womenfolk toil away. What the farmers learn in Israel is a combination of things, not just the need for investment and innovation but farming as the way of life.
One of the biggest challenges here in Nepal is land fragmentation because a father divides his property among his children, he shouldn’t have to do that, it is his private property. But

then the younger generation, the children do not want to continue farming. Traditional farming is scenic to look at, but ineffective. Also, people do not invest enough in agriculture here, and expect returns prematurely.
There are now about 3,000 Nepali farmers who have gone to Israel and are now back all over Nepal. How are they doing?
I’m in constant touch with the returnees. Not all of them are doing agriculture, maybe just a third. But these 1,000 are quality farmers. They are doing vegetables, livestock, fish, poultry, fruits and everything in between. But each one of them is specialising in something. You can’t be a farmer that is doing mangoes, poultry, vegetables, and bananas at the same time, you have to specialise if you want to do it on an industrial scale.

Why has farming become a priority in Nepal-Israel relations more than the other sectors?
Agriculture is a priority, but it is not the only thing that we are doing here. People are not aware that there are a lot of Israeli companies located in Kathmandu working in high tech, hiring Nepali youth who get to work remotely but make salaries that Israelis do. And that is because Nepal has talented software developers, among others.
Also last year we sent about 1,000 Nepali caregivers to Israel. A lesser-known fact is that Israeli tourists are now starting to come in thousands and they often stay for longer periods.
Our agriculture program is better known because it has become a model. Many farmers have come back and become almost ambassadors of sorts for Israel.

We are in the dairy farm run by Ang Phurba Sherpa who seems to have good managerial skills and knows about doing sustainable farming.
What Nepalis like Ang Phurba learn is that Israel is a young nation with farmers only in their first and second generation, still learning and trying to improve the ways to do it. Israel used to be a desert, a nation of immigrants but we cultivated the land. When Nepalis see that and how we overcome the challenges, they realise that they can too.

You have had the second tenure as an ambassador, is there a chance that you’ll come back a third time as an ambassador?
Sure, why not. The former Israeli ambassador Benny Omar is still here and has opened a restaurant in Patan. Much like you have the highest point in the world, we have the Dead Sea, the lowest. Ten years ago we took two stones from the Dead Sea to Everest and vice versa. At the time, we also issued a stamp that is common to Israel and Nepal, with the highest and the lowest points at 8,448m and -432m. But there are thousands of beautiful places just one hour from Kathmandu. I encourage everybody to enjoy the country and preserve it.



Kathmandu’s Little Bajura

Farmers from western Nepal, now prefer to migrate to the capital than to India

■ Dhanu Bishwakarma

From his village in Bajura in western Nepal, the Indian border is much closer than Kathmandu, so that is where Manbir Sanjyal (pictured with his family, right) has been going to find work since he was much younger.
India is referred to here as कालापहाड, beyond the black mountains. And hundreds of thousands of Nepalis, especially from western Nepal, have for many decades crossed over to work as apple pickers, porters, domestic help or security guards in India.
Sanjyal worked in Kumaon, Garhwal, Delhi, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh for years, and eventually he returned to Bajura. Kathmandu may be 800km away, but with better connectivity Sanjyal and many like him do not have to be migrant workers in India — they can be migrant workers in the capital.
Sanjyal, now 59, moved to Kathmandu six months ago after farming in Bajura became insufficient to feed his family. He rented a farm in Panga at the western edge of the Valley and grows vegetables to sell in the market. He is doing so well, he plans to get into dairy farming as well.
“When we were young we toiled in India, now our grandchildren can make a living growing food in our own country,” says Sanjyal, looking out from his greenhouse. “In addition, the grandchildren can get better education and health care here.”
Sanjyal’s son Jeevan completed high



school in Bajura, and wants to go to college in Kathmandu. Bajura ranks lowest among Nepal’s 77 districts in the human development index. Poverty and poor harvests are endemic in the district because of lack of state support for irrigation. This makes

Karnali Province the most food deficit part of Nepal with one of the highest rates of stunting and wasting among children.
News of Sanjyal’s success has reached his village in Bajura and inspired other families to also make a move to Kathmandu.

Lali Prasad Pandey came to Kathmandu after hearing about his sister’s successful commercial vegetable farming business in Kirtipur. He had worked in Qatar for three years before returning home to Saunegaun in Bajura, where he attempted unsuccessfully to

Down in Sherpa's farm

Israel-returnee runs a profitable agro-business while also helping other Nepali farmers thrive

■ Sonia Awale

Members of Nepal's Sherpa community are known the world over for their mountain climbing expertise. But Ang Phurba Sherpa is proving that the inhabitants of villages below Mt Everest can be equally expert farmers.

Just away from the hustle and bustle of the city in Gokarna Ang Phurba is busy on the morning rounds of his dairy farm, inspecting the milking machines.

The farm is spread across half a hectare in Sundarijal amidst a lush backdrop of Shivapuri National Park. The smell of cow dung is mixed with the odour of disinfectant at the door to prevent lumpy skin disease that is spreading across Nepal.

Ang Phurba has 175 Jerseys, 85 of them milking cows, some are lazily chewing the cud while others feed on hay. Cows that just delivered are in a separate maternity ward. The lone bull has a corner all to himself.

Salaka Dairy Farm was established 10 years ago, and is one of the two largest dairy farms in the country producing 1,300 litres of milk every day sold to 700 households in the Gokarna area who subscribe to home delivery. Customers also visit the farm for fresh dairy products, and there is an outlet in Boudha for paneer, rasbari and other processed products.

What sets the Salaka apart from other dairies is the productivity, a concept Ang Phurba says he learnt when he spent eight years in Israel working a floriculture farm. His



cows produce up to 22 litres of milk a day when Nepali cows on average give only 5 litres daily. What is his secret?

"I just give them nutritious feed, as much as they can eat. Water is important, they drink the same quality water as I do," explains the 34-year-old Sherpa as he shows visitors around his farm guarded by fierce-looking dogs.

Ang Phurba is originally from Salleri in Solu Khumbu and left on a work visa to Israel where he trained primarily in floriculture. But after eight years, he was determined to start something of his own back home, deploying the techniques he had learned in Israel.

Three months after he returned, Ang Phurba leased the farm in Gokarna and started growing vegetables for sale in the

Kathmandu market. He was doing fairly well, but faced a chronic shortage of organic fertiliser.

At the same time he found that the demand for milk was much higher than any other agricultural product in Kathmandu. Which gave him the idea to start a dairy which would also allow him to produce his own manure.

The idea worked brilliantly. Today, Ang Phurba's farm is making more money from selling organic fertiliser than from selling milk products. Vermicomposting is a simple but highly cost-effective technology of converting farm waste such as cow dung into organic manure with the cooperation of willing earthworms.

Salaka produces 1.5 tons of vermicompost per day and the product is so much in demand from

all over Nepal, that it is out of stock at the moment. Even when it is available, Ang Phurba's employees cannot fill the sacks fast enough to meet demand.

Ang Phurba Sherpa is a different breed of businessman-farmer, who is not looking just for quick returns, but sees the larger picture. He trains other farmers and willingly shares his knowledge, and sells his vermicompost at just Rs18 per kg even though it can fetch anywhere up to Rs100 in the market.

Asked why he does not sell it for more, Ang Phurba replies:

"I am not interested in getting rich fast, the idea is to make fertiliser affordable and accessible to local farmers so that they can also be more productive. As long as I am not losing money, I am happy.

I will prosper if everyone else prospers."

Ang Phurba still grows vegetables in his adjoining greenhouses, fertilised by his own compost. He has plans to expand his dairy, and modernise his workflow.

He is in Israel this week to attend workshops on recent advancements in the dairy industry with a special focus on low-emission technologies for energy-intensive farms.

Ang Phurba believes in hard work, building a strong network of local farmers and taking one right step at a time. He says: "Eventually I want to manufacture fully processed UHT milk that people can drink directly out of the bottle without having to boil it like elsewhere in the world." 🇳🇵



PHOTOS: SUMAN NEPALI

make a living farming.

"I did make some money during my time overseas, but it was not enough to cover costs of healthcare or my children's education," he says. Pandey has been a vegetable farmer in Kirtipur for six years now, and his neighbours are also farmers from far-western districts like Bajura, Humla, Jumla, Kalikot, Mugu, and Rukum-West.

Like Sanjyal, Pandey has set up

greenhouses to grow seasonal vegetables and finds a ready market in Kathmandu, even though over the years the profit margin has fallen.

So, Pandey recently bought four cows to diversify his business, and sells milk door-to-door at Rs100 per litre. The cows also provide fertiliser for his vegetable farming business.

"Dairy farming is like having a salaried government job," Pandey jokes, referring to

the secure income it provides.

But the extra work also means he and his wife have to work 24/7 on the farm, and there is no time to go home to Bajura.

Coming to Kathmandu was a good move, and Pandey has been able to send his children to better schools, and he is happy he does not have to be separated from his family any more.

Tilakhuni BK was Pandey's neighbour in Bajura, and also came to Kathmandu hearing about the favourable business environment and schooling for the children.

But Tilakhuni has not been as successful with her farm in Kirtipur. Her family invested Rs200,000 on the greenhouses and terraces, but then came the Covid lockdowns. She had to sell her cows, and her husband had to go to Saudi Arabia to supplement their income.

Tilakhuni was bargaining with a customer on the phone, and when she hung up complained that she would do all right if she could deal directly with buyers more often. But the middlemen take away most of her margin.

While Tilakhuni sells her greenhouse tomatoes at Rs15/kg, middlemen sell them to city wholesalers for Rs50. "We do all the work, but get none of the benefits, no matter how hard we work," she says.

Despite this, life in Kathmandu Valley is still better than in her village Bajura. She says, "I may not be earning as much as I expected, but I am happy with what I have. Whatever hardship we face here is nothing compared to the struggles we had in the village."

Tilakhuni's priority is that the children get quality education in the city. Her brother, children, and nephew attend school in Kirtipur. Her eldest son has completed his SEE exam, and her daughter is currently in middle school.

"The quality of education in the city is much better than that in the village," says BK's daughter Ramita. "We get an English medium education here and this improves our chances of going abroad in future."

Hearing about Tilakhuni's work also convinced Deepa BK to move to Kirtipur four months ago. Deepa currently helps Tilakhuni on her farm but is actively thinking of leasing her own vegetable farm.

"I came here so that my children do not have to suffer and grow up the way that I did," says Deepa. "There is no future for the children back home."

Her husband currently works in India, and is now making preparations to move to Kathmandu.

Health care is another reason the Bajura families all migrated to Kathmandu, and for a feeling of home, they all live near each other in Kirtipur and Panga.

Tilakhuni BK and her husband were both unable to get medical treatment for their ailments in India, but found health care to be better and more accessible in Kathmandu.

Manbir Sanjyal requires regular dialysis, but the facility is not available at the Bajura District Hospital in Martadi. So he moved to Kathmandu, but says the state is not fulfilling its responsibility to provide healthcare in rural areas.

Lali Prasad Pandey agrees: "Hospitals in Bajura do not meet even basic needs. If the state had made these services available in our home district, we would not have had to move here." 🇳🇵



BAJURA IN NEPAL

For generations, men from Western Nepal have crossed over the border to India to work as apple pickers, porters, domestic help or security guards. Now with better connectivity they no longer have to leave the country, instead they migrate to the capital for work.



Pokhara 800 years ago

New paper describes collapse of Annapurna 4 that created the terraces on which the city is located today

■ Kunda Dixit

A 7.8 magnitude earthquake in 1255 shook the entire Himalayan region, Tibetan plateau and northern India. We know the exact date because there are historical records that one-third of the population of Kathmandu was killed, including King Abhaya Malla. At about the same time, the entire western flank of Annapurna 4 broke off, fell into the glacier, covered the basin in pulverised rock and melting ice, and dammed the Seti River.

A recent paper in the journal Nature has now described just how cataclysmic this event was, and also that it could happen again.

The rockslide was so enormous that it chopped off 500m of the top of the summit of Annapurna 4 which then was an eight thousander. The peak is now 7,525m, and scientists estimate that 23 km³ of rock fell nearly 3,000 vertical metres into the Sabche Cirque.

The study titled Medieval Demise of a Himalayan Giant Summit Induced by Mega-landslide has Jérôme Lavé of CNRS, Université de Lorraine in France as lead author, and includes Ananta Prasad Gajurel of the Department of Geology, Tribhuvan University.

Although the study is an investigation into ways in

which Himalayan mountains erode along their glaciers and headwalls, it takes as a case study the Annapurna 4 rockfall in approximately 1190CE.

‘Our data suggest that a mode of high-altitude erosion could be mega-rockslides, leading to the sudden reduction of ridge-crest elevation by several hundred metres and ultimately preventing the disproportionate growth of Himalayan peaks,’ the paper notes.

The scientists examined the debris in the Sabche Cirque which in the past 800 years has eroded into sharp limestone pinnacles with exposed glacier-polished bedrock, and conclude that the breccia came down in the collapse.

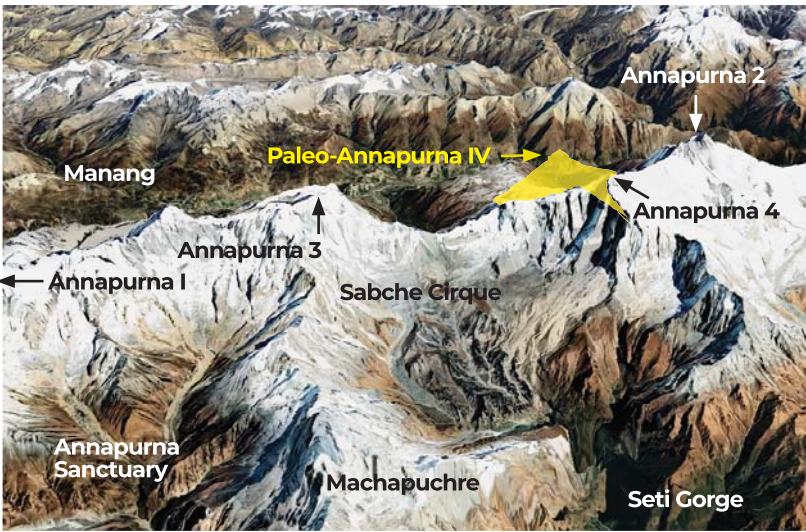
They sketch a model of the mountain as it probably existed before its collapse, showing where the immediate debris fell, and where it was eventually transported downstream by the Seti River to create the sediment fan on which the city of Pokhara is located today.

The deposits brought down by the river dammed side streams, creating Phewa, Rupa, Begnas and other lakes that make the valley so scenic today.

The paper says the catastrophic Sabche rockslide has lessons for present-day Nepal: ‘Giant rockslides also have implications for landscape



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evolution and natural hazards: the massive supply of finely crushed sediments can fill valleys more than 150 km farther downstream and overwhelm the sediment load

in Himalayan rivers for a century or more.’

Indeed, the summit ridge of Annapurna 4 is still raw and sees frequent rockfalls, including a

smaller one almost exactly at the same spot in May 2012 and an ensuing flood on the Seti River that killed at least 70 people.

Although the authors do not seem to think the rockslide 800 years ago was caused by a seismic event, there are records of big earthquakes in central Nepal in 1223, 1255 and five years later in 1260, which approximately fit the timeline for the Sabche event.

Even if the collapse was not directly caused by an earthquake, the differential in the pace of erosion of the glacial valley and the headwall could eventually lead to failure of overhanging slopes.

Scientists speculate that climate change-induced melting of permafrost that cements rocks above the 0°C isotherm could be a factor in the 2012 event on Annapurna IV and Saldim Peak in the Makalu-Barun in 2017. 🇳🇵

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