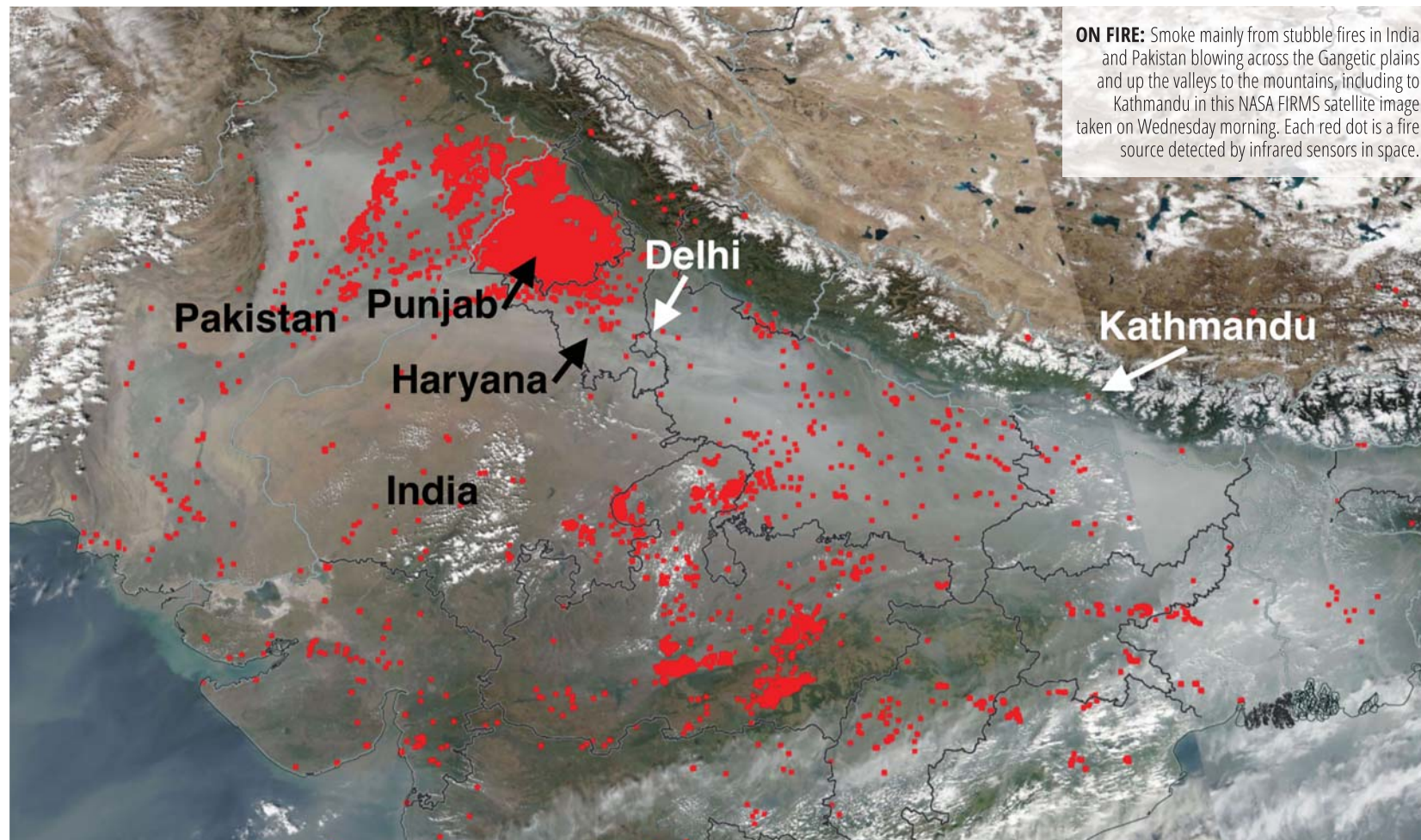




Experience

our 24x7 Client Care Centre at +977 1 4791800/5424198



**ON FIRE:** Smoke mainly from stubble fires in India and Pakistan blowing across the Gangetic plains and up the valleys to the mountains, including to Kathmandu in this NASA FIRMS satellite image taken on Wednesday morning. Each red dot is a fire source detected by infrared sensors in space.

## Toxic Tihar

■ Sonia Awale

Spices used to sharpen food taste and also have medicinal properties, none more so than turmeric. But researchers have found turmeric mixed with lead chromate to enhance its golden colour.

Such turmeric contained lead levels up to 500 times the legal limit of 2.5 micrograms per gram in Bangladesh. Lead was also detected in turmeric in India.

"We import turmeric from India and Bangladesh, so there is no doubt we are also being exposed to harmful levels of lead," says Ram Charitra Sah at the Centre for Public Health and Environmental Development (CEPHED) which campaigns against lead in paints, cosmetics and toys. "Nepal must urgently conduct research of its own and introduce regulations."

Lead poisoning contributes to over 5.5 million premature deaths a year globally. There is also a strong correlation between

elevated Blood Lead Level (BLL) and decreased IQ in children.

In 2015, Nepal enacted a mandatory Lead Paint Standard of 90ppm to eliminate lead-based paint from Nepal. A CEPHED study in 2021 found that only 52% of the paints sampled were compliant, although major paint brands that make up 80% of the market are complying with the standard.

Synthetic dyes and vermilion powder used in festival rituals, especially upcoming Tihar, contain not just lead but also mercury, cadmium, copper, silica, mica granules or ground glass, and asbestos. These can cause a wide range of health problems and even lead to blindness, hearing loss, cancer, paralysis, dermatitis, renal failure, and asthma, among others.

"Nepal needs to make mandatory standards and implement them through regulatory agencies," Sah says. "Equally important is consumer awareness, continued research and laboratory facilities."

### Shaking things up EDITORIAL PAGE 2

Tihar next week also coincides with the stubble burning season in the Subcontinent. Every year, smoke from agricultural residue burning in north India and Pakistan engulfs Delhi and other north Indian cities. Prevailing winds blow the particles up to Nepal.

The Tarai has been affected for the past week, and the smoke was also blown up to Kathmandu Valley, although it cleared somewhat on Wednesday.

A NASA FIRMS satellite image this week showed a dramatic decline in the number of fires in Haryana and Punjab which coincided with the Indian Supreme Court directing Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi to take immediate steps to stop stubble burning.

"There are far fewer fires in Pakistani Punjab where I visited in September, and that is because the government of the province has taken a much harsher approach to punishing farmers who are caught burning their fields," says atmospheric scientist Arnico Panday who is a member of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP).

In cities like Delhi and Lahore, peak pollution times occur when large numbers of farmers burn straw and stubble on the fields which is becoming common also in the

Nepal Tarai. But it is the annual average pollution that leads to a range of long-term health impacts.

Adds Panday: "Reducing the annual average pollution levels requires addressing the year-round sources such as factories, vehicles, and cooking fires. This happens through a commitment to invest in clean energy solutions and imposing more stringent emissions standards on vehicles and industries."

Firecrackers during Tihar will also add to the problem. The government has already issued a ban on the import, sale and use of fireworks and explosives during Tihar which starts on Friday. But the proof of the pudding is in the implementation. 🇳🇵

### Nepali Times Wishes Readers Happy Tihar, Chhath and बहुर्र्या भिनुना ११४४



Because of the holidays there will be no print edition of the paper on Friday 17 November. The next hard copy issue of Nepali Times will be on 24 November, 2023. Visit nepalitimes.com for daily updates and original multimedia content.



**20<sup>th</sup>**  
Outsource Your  
Non-Core Staff Through  
Suvidha Staffing

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

+977- 9851247213  
www.suvidhasewa.com.np

Suvidha Sewa

**The Chinese Room**  
thamel  
For Reservation:  
9815597346  
Durbarmarg

**New Orleans Cafe**  
Thamel  
01-4700736  
LIVE MUSIC  
FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS

**eScan**  
Anti-Virus  
TOTAL PROTECTION  
for Computers, Mobiles & Tablets  
An ISO 27001 Certified Company  
Contact no.: 01-4330980  
www.escanav.com

## welcome winter

From cozy cardigans to stylish scarves, winter can be welcomed with posh cashmere. Find it all at our Thamel showroom —casual wears to homemaker collection, all under one roof.



**NATUREKNIT**  
CASHMERE REDEFINED



# Shaking things up

The deadly midnight earthquake last Friday in Karnali Province occurred in an area where seismologists had long predicted the next Big One.

This was the 'seismic gap' that this newspaper first wrote about in its 9-15 January 2004 edition commemorating National Earthquake Safety Day and the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 8.5 magnitude 1934 disaster.

The subduction of the Indian plate into and below the Eurasian landmass leads to accumulated stress in the rock strata deep beneath the Himalaya. This tectonic tension builds up over time, and if it is not released periodically the result could be a megaquake that could mean a rupture leading to 6m or more of horizontal surface displacement.



Seismic experts now say that the 3 November event was not the massive one that was expected. At 6.4 it was a moderate quake with a shallow epicenter, which is why the destruction was limited to a relatively small radius although the shaking was felt as far away as Delhi and Kathmandu.

The disaster also exposed Nepal's demographic shift. Of the 157 confirmed dead so far, many were women because most men have migrated abroad for work. There was also a class and caste element, as the flimsiest homes belonged to the poorest families.

Disaster management experts like to say that it is not earthquakes that kill people but buildings. Indeed, quakes are not 'natural disasters' but mostly man made. Proof of this was the 25 April 2105 earthquake which killed nearly 9,000 people in central Nepal as substandard buildings collapsed.

Tragically, this also was proven in last week's disaster when fragile stone and mud plaster homes collapsed with the very first jolt. Newer buildings with reinforced concrete columns withstood the shaking, but had the intensity and duration of the quake been longer, they would have also crumbled.

Seismologists say the Jajarkot quake was not strong enough to release all the tectonic stress -- which could mean it was either a precursor to a bigger one to come, or it has made the region safe for another decade or so.

There is no way to predict it either way. What we know for sure is that the next one is not a question of 'if' but 'when'. It is better to invest now in preparedness than in counting bodies and the number of collapsed buildings after a disaster.

For this, we already have lessons from the 2015 earthquake. Nearly 7,500 school buildings with 35,000 classrooms collapsed eight years ago and even if we make a conservative estimate of only 10 students per class, the loss of young lives would have been catastrophic. What saved them was that the quake happened on a Saturday.

In Jajarkot and Rukum West last week, many families were crushed by their falling homes while they slept. But given the number of schools that have collapsed, the casualty rate may have been higher if the quake had happened in the daytime on a weekday.

The first order of business for prevention would therefore be to retrofit school buildings all over Nepal, but especially in Gandaki, Karnali and Far Western Provinces. Earthquake safety instruction and drills should also be mandatory in schools. Digging tools, tents, first

aid kits and go bags must be pre-positioned in school premises which can serve as shelters. Hospitals and public buildings also need to be retrofitted, and private home owners encouraged to make safety inspections.

There are now earthquake early alert systems available that give up to 30 second warnings by analysing earthquake P waves and estimating its location and intensity to send alerts either through alarm devices installed in schools, or now on Android phones.

In fact, in the last 5.7 magnitude earthquake on 3 October in Bajhang, many people with Android phones got alerts in Kathmandu even while the earthquake was happening 500km away. Personal phones therefore became seismometers and could even give prior warning of quakes if Nepal becomes part of the US Geological Survey's ShakeAlert system.

The awkwardly acronymed NDRRMA (National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority) was given a back seat in the aftermath of the Jajarkot quake. Its chief was travelling, and the government put in place a 'one window' coordination unit in Karnali that, instead of facilitating a more efficient mechanism for relief delivery, has become a bottleneck. The 3 November disaster would be dress rehearsal for a bigger catastrophe to come, and sadly, we did not come off with flying colours this time.

## The Jajarkot earthquake could be a dress rehearsal for an even bigger disaster in the near future.

## ONLINE PACKAGES



EVERY DAY IS DOG DAY

On Kukur Tihar, we worship our pets and community dogs, garlanding and feeding them treats. But in the evening, many of the same families will light firecrackers to frighten the living daylights out of their dogs. Read story on page 13 and watch the video online. Subscribe to our YouTube channel for more original multimedia content.



THE SWEET HERITAGE

The Nanda Mithai Bhandar, a 150-year-old traditional sweet shop in Patan Darbar Square, has survived earthquakes, upheavals and epidemics. Meet the fourth-generation Rajkarnikars to hear about continuing their culinary heritage. Watch everyone's favourite jeri being prepared, one step at a time.

### EARTHQUAKE

Let's hope the government swiftly provides the necessary support to those affected by the earthquake in Jajarkot and Rukum ('Deadly earthquake hits W Nepal', nepalitimes.com).

Santosh Nepal

■ The earthquake in Jajarkot has caused much greater human and material damage than we expected. Relief and rescue is now the first priority. Let us all help the government from our own respective places with positive pressure for effective rescue and relief in this time of crisis.

Tanneri Chaso

■ We live in an active seismic zone. Buildings kill people not earthquakes. The Nepal government should enforce strict building codes accordingly.

Airline Guy

■ Wishing for all authorities to come together to rescue, evacuate and treat the injured.

Rabin Dhungana

### PUTALI BAJE

Colin Smith was great man of honour, and a true friend of Nepal and Nepalis ('पुतली बाजे and the metaphor of metamorphosis', Shristi Karki, nepalitimes.com). He taught me to appreciate the wonderful world of butterflies in Nepal, and thought me how to turn my collecting into a scientific hobby. He also shared his knowledge to thousands of Nepalis as a teacher in Nepali schools.

Ben-Erik Ness

■ Rest in peace, Colin Smith. Thanks for your service to the butterflies of Nepal.

Forester

### NEPAL MOUNTAINS

It is not just the mountains of Central Nepal that are spectacular but the rest are ignored ('Getting up close and personal with the mountains', nepalitimes.com). Think of poor Lhotse - the 4<sup>th</sup> highest peak in the world, yet mostly ignored.

Arnico Panday

## WHAT'S TRENDING

### Nepalis take backdoor to the American dream

by Janak Raj Sapkota  
Rukum was where the Maoists launched their revolution in 1996 against feudal monarchy and 'American imperialism'. Today, young men from almost every family in some villages in this earthquake-hit bifurcated district have smuggled themselves to America. Get the details online.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

### Nepal on my mind

by Ishwar Chaulagain  
He started as a waiter in Qatar but his lack of English language skills hindered promotion. He transitioned to back-end roles in hospitality but over the years, progressed to managerial positions in luxury hotels. Read about his journey on our website.

Most popular on Twitter



### Deadly earthquake hits W Nepal

At least 157 people were killed after a 6.4 magnitude earthquake struck Rukum West and Jajarkot districts just before midnight on Friday. Himalayan seismologists have predicted that a mega earthquake is long overdue in western Nepal because there has not been a big one to release the tectonic tension there for over 600 years. Read page 3 for reports from the field.

Most commented

### He came, he saw, he left

Editorial  
UN Secretary General António Guterres emphasised the twin dangers of climate and conflict during his four-day visit to Nepal, highlighting the "climate injustice" that made a country that does not contribute much to climate breakdown the most vulnerable.

Most visited online page

## QUOTE TWEETS

**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**  
Deadly earthquake hits Western Nepal. The death toll in the remote villages of Karnali is now 125 with hundreds injured, but these figures are expected to rise. Seismologists had predicted that a megaquake was long overdue in this region. #NepalEarthquake

**Renaud Meyer @renaudmeyer**  
Worried for #Nepal with this strong earthquake in #Karnali where remote villages are very difficult to access. Hope the impact won't be too dramatic

**@prasiit**  
Horrific scenes in and around Jajarkot. Hope proper aid reaches the affected asap.

**Manjeet Dhakal @manjeetdhakal**  
Thoughts and prayers go out to the families who have lost loved ones and to all those impacted. Let's stand together and provide support in this difficult time. #NepalEarthquake

**PLinIndia @PLinIndia**  
Deeply saddened by the news of an earthquake in Nepal. Our sympathy and sincere condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones and to everyone affected by the disaster.

## 20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

### The Bhutanese Refugee Saga

For the first time, big heads rolled in Nepal when the fake Bhutanese refugee scandal implicated top politicians, their families and bureaucrats. Of course, the bigger heads were spared and the investigation came to an abrupt halt with the transfer of police officers working the case.

Up until the early 2000s there was still some hope for repatriation to Bhutan. Excerpts of the report published 20 years ago this week on Nepali Times issue #169 7-13 November 2003:

Shanti Ram Acharya has 12 dependants, all living at Khudunabari camp. Though all of them have been 'lucky' to make it to Category I (bonafide Bhutani), he is having second thoughts about applying for voluntary repatriation that begins on 15 February 2004.

"We wish we could go back, but there are a lot of uncertainties. Yes, we have been assured that we will be given citizenship immediately after repatriation, but what about land, houses and property that we lost?" he asks.

Acharya's dilemma is not uncommon. In the refugee

camps of east Nepal, it is apparent that most Bhutanis are

sceptical about the "major breakthrough" of the 15<sup>th</sup> round of ministerial talks in Thimpu last month. The leader of the Nepali delegation, Bhik Bahadur Thapa, said he had returned "a happy man", but his joy is not shared by most Bhutanis here who have waited over a decade to go home.

"The Thimpu agreement isn't anything new," says Dr Til Bahadur Gurung, camp secretary at Khudunabari. "A timeframe has been set for the completion of repatriation, that's the only new element that I can see." Gurung's ancestral home is Chirang's Lali Kharka in Bhutan, but he has been placed in category II.

For archived material of Nepali Times of the past 20 years, site search: nepalitimes.com



**ALL-MEN MEETING:** Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal addressing the all-party meeting on Sunday in Singha Darbar to discuss relief for the Karnali earthquake affected areas. The only woman in the meeting was Pampha Bhusal of the Maoist Centre Party.





# Quake survivors wait for kin to return

Families of those killed in the earthquake wait for family members abroad to perform funeral rites

■ Sagar Budhathoki in Jajarkot

Survivors of the 3 November earthquake in Kolchaur village have been waiting for kin to return from abroad so they can perform the cremation rites of those who died. When the earthquake hit just before midnight on Friday, six people, all from the same family, lost their lives here, buried when their home collapsed.

On Sunday morning, villagers gathered in front of what used to be the home of Hasti Kami. Some stacked logs while others made bamboo stretchers for the bodies to be taken down to the river for the collective cremation.

They had been waiting for the bodies of five of those killed to arrive from the morgue at Jajarkot Hospital where they had been kept until Hasti's son Uday, who is a migrant worker in Malaysia, arrived. On Friday, Hasti, 62 along with eight of her family had gone to bed after dinner. Hasti only found two of her grandsons, Bikram and Ujwal still alive. Neighbours helped dig out the bodies of the other six members in the darkness.

Hasti lost her daughter-in-



ALL PHOTOS: GOPEN RAI

law Januka, 30, granddaughters Sharmila, 13 and Anjali, 9 and her four-year-old grandson Ujjwal. They are the wife and children of Uday who arrived from Malaysia

on Sunday. Hasti also lost two other granddaughters Niruta, 11, who is Uday's brother's daughter and Bishnu Tiruwa ,8, who is the daughter of Uday's sister Lalmati.

Lalmati had left her daughter in the care of her mother when she went to work in Kuwait. Bishnu's body is still in the hospital waiting for her mother's return.

Around 1pm, the bodies arrived from the hospital wrapped in white cloth. As the five were laid in front of the house, Hasti folded her hands and started weeping, asking for forgiveness for not being able to save her family.

Uday arrived at the ruins of his home amidst the cry of mourners. He was in shock, and could not say anything as he knelt next to the bodies of his wife and children. He could not even shed a tear. A relative said, "At least look at your son's face." Uday finally spoke: "What is there to look at? There is nothing left anymore." Another relative removed the cloth around the face of his four-year-old son. Uday could not control himself and finally let out a cry, saying: "God! Why did you do this to me? Why should I live when the ones for whom I worked to take care of are no more?"

His hands trembled as he smeared vermilion on his son's face. He still could not bring himself to look at his daughters and wife's face. "Look at them one last time," relatives urged him.

Neighbours then carried the bodies and headed down to the cremation site by the river. Hasti followed, stopping midway with other women from the village.

Today, she bid farewell to five of her family members, she still has to see off her youngest granddaughter whose body was waiting for her mother to arrive from Kuwait. 🇳🇵

## Grief-stricken survivors are cold and hungry

Shock turned to grief, and now it is accompanied by hunger and cold. Complicated logistics and bureaucracy has meant that relief material has not yet reached the village of Chiuri in Jajarkot that was devastated by the midnight earthquake of 3 November.

Thirteen of those killed in just this one village were cremated in a collective funeral by the banks of Bheri on Sunday. It was nightfall, and the mourners had still not returned.

The survivors were spreading out freshly harvested straw under a plastic sheet to make a bed for their second night out in the open. It gets chilly after sunset here, and the families have rolled up some tattered blankets they have retrieved from the ruins of their homes.

Even in Chiuri, the worst affected part was the predominantly-Dalit Imle neighbourhood where four members of Hire Kami's family were killed in their sleep when their house collapsed. Only eight-year-old Premkali was pulled out alive from the rubble, having lost lost her parents and two siblings.

The underserved Dalit community in these mountains of northwestern Nepal usually have the flimsiest houses made of stone and mud, and nine of them in Imle immediately collapsed when the first jolts of the shallow earthquake hit.

Premkali herself was hurt in her head, finger and back by a falling beam, and had just been brought back from hospital. She was staring into the distance outside her



collapsed home, wincing in pain.

The eight-year-old seemed to be in complete shock, and would even be startled by neighbours consoling her. "Poor thing, you have no one now, who will look after you," one neighbor Debmaya BK said to Premkali. Tears streamed down both her cheeks, the girl could not say anything.

One of Premkali's elder brothers went to India a few years ago, and there is hope that he will return to take care of her. She does not even remember her brother's face since he left when she was very young.

Since there was no one except the girl left in the family, the combined cremation for Hire Kami, his wife and two sons was performed by a neighbor, Lal Bahadur Kami.

He told us: "They have no one else."

It is early winter here in the mountains, and the nights are getting cold. Nearly all the 80 houses in Chiuri have been damaged or destroyed, many pots and pans are buried and families cannot even cook a hot meal in the open. There is a bottleneck in supplies reaching these remote villages because the government has decided to coordinate all relief through the Nepal Army base in Surkhet, and there are only a limited number of helicopters.

Bhagwati BK has prepared the straw beds for mourners returning from the funeral, and says: "If the earthquake did not kill us, the cold probably will. We urgently need shelter, food and warm clothes."

Sabitri BK, 21, from Chapaghat village was inconsolable on the banks of the Bheri on Sunday afternoon as the logs were laid out on the funeral pyres for her five-year-old son who was crushed when their home collapsed. Sabitri and her husband were rescued.

"Oh god, why didn't you take me instead?" she implored, looking up at the sky.

Dipa Pariyar, 60, was also at the river side waiting for the joint funeral for her two granddaughters, 16 and 26, and a 18-month-old grandson. Her son was not at home and her daughter-in-law was injured. A relative and her nine-year-old daughter were also killed.

Pariyar wept, as she said: "Why did you have to save me, god, and kill them?" 🇳🇵

## Demographics of disaster in Karnali quake

Most of the 157 fatalities in the 6.4 magnitude earthquake that struck western Nepal at midnight on 3 November are women and children, some as young as 10 months old.

The mountainous region is one of the least developed and most remote in Nepal, and families depend on subsistence agriculture. Most of the men have traditionally migrated to work in India, or more recently to the Gulf or Malaysia to support families back home. Rukum West is also from where many young people have paid human traffickers to take them to the United States.

Although the earthquake was of moderate intensity and hit a sparsely populated area, the death toll was high because it struck at night when most people were sleeping at home. Also, houses here are flimsy, traditionally built with stones and mud mortar. Most of the reinforced concrete structures in the main market areas seem to have survived the shaking.

The shallowness of the earthquake below the epicentre at Barekot of Jajarkot also seems to have meant that the heaviest damage is concentrated mainly in the two



districts. Only one person was wounded in the neighbouring Rolpa district.

In Barekot itself, chair of the rural municipality Bar Bahadur Giri said the destruction was beyond his town's ability to handle it on its own. "Every house here is damaged, there are aftershocks, and people

are camped out in the open to spend the second night," he said by phone.

After the first jolt, Giri and his staff started calling around and drove out on their motorcycles to the most affected areas to help dig people trapped under the rubble. Luckily, no one was killed in the municipality and

there were only four injured who were taken to hospital.

"Of the 3,587 houses in the municipality, 2,000 of them have completely collapsed," Giri said. "The schools and health posts are also damaged. We urgently need tents and food for those who are out in the open."

Jajarkot and Rukum West are so remote that medical care is difficult even in the best of times. Jajarkot falls under the Health Service Directorate based in Surkhet that looks after 10 districts in Karnali. Its head Rabin Khadka says his office has sent additional medical personnel, equipment and medicines to the affected areas. Nurses and surgical teams have also been sent from hospitals run by the APF, Army and Police.

"Whatever human resources and equipment and medicines we have here is not enough, we have asked Kathmandu to rush help," Khadka said. "We also lack information about where the need is greatest, and what type of help is needed the most. We are just assuming that the requirements are great everywhere. We are also trying to send a surgical team to avoid long bumpy rides to hospital for the

seriously injured."

Surkhet's Bheri Hospital, Police and Army hospitals also have reared 105 beds for referral patients from the mountain districts. Seven severely injured have been medevaced to Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu.

Seriously injured people have been taken to Bheri Hospital, Nepalganj. This is the highest death toll since the 2015 earthquake which killed nearly 9,000 people.

Among the dead included Sarita Singh Thakuri, the Deputy Mayor of Nalgad Municipality, Jajarkot.

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal had visited Jajarkot district hospital on Saturday morning to meet survivors, and brought some of the severely injured with him in his Army helicopter to Surkhet.

To ensure effective response, the Home Ministry has decided to entrust the District Disaster Management Committee the responsibility of streamlining rescue and relief through its Surkhet and Nepalganj hubs.

The government has also decided to send Rs50 million to the disaster management fund of Jajarkot and West Rukum from the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority. 🇳🇵



■ **Durga Rana Magar**  
in Pokhara

**M**aury Mason was following a Shelduck gliding over the mirror calm water of Begnas Lake through binoculars from his rooftop when a motorboat cut through the stillness. The startled bird flew away.

Mason came to Nepal from Canada 52 years ago, travelling across the country before reaching Pokhara and promptly falling in love with the city. He remained enamoured by the beauty of the valley, its lakes and its rich diversity of birdlife.

Mason lives by Begnas Lake, having fled Pokhara's overdevelopment. He was not so bothered by tourists on row boats on the lake, but then came the motorboats.

Residents of the Pachbhaiya village near Begnas were also shocked by the motorboats, which were introduced by local businessmen of the Begnas Lake Boat Traders Committee.

Without a hint of irony, Ravi Raj Kandel of the committee says the boats were brought to "develop tourism" in Begnas.

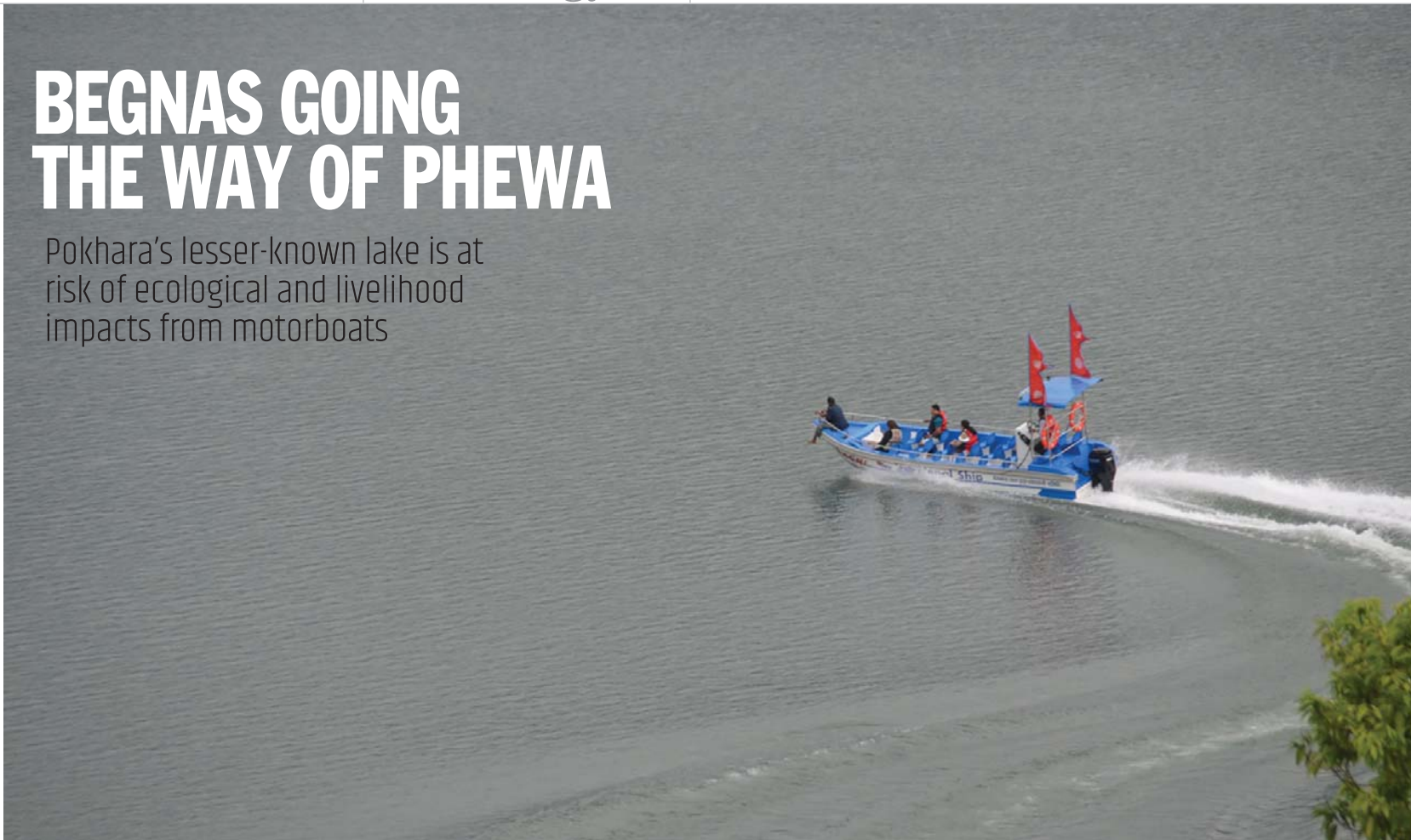
The motorboat can carry 10 people at a time, and each passenger is charged Rs400 for the ride. The Committee is promoting the motorboats for groups larger than ten rather than paddle boats.

"We have introduced the motorboats for rescue operations and so pilgrims can visit the Baraha Temple on the lake," says Dhak Nath Kandel, ward chair of Pokhara Metropolitan City-31, which includes Begnas.

The 250 wooden paddle boat operators as well as the local fishing committee were not consulted, and it has affected their livelihood. Along with residents, they have

# BEGNAS GOING THE WAY OF PHEWA

Pokhara's lesser-known lake is at risk of ecological and livelihood impacts from motorboats



DURGA RANA MAGAR

protested against the motorboats.

Local fisher Tanka Jalari says the fish yield has decreased since the boats were introduced and his income has dropped from Rs30,000 a month to almost zero.

Jalari adds that it is dangerous to go out on the lake when the motorboats are operating. "Our family has to constantly go back and forth across the lake, and those motorboats can easily capsize our small fishing boats," he says.

Manoj Gurung, a resident of Pachbhaiya, enjoyed the novelty of seeing motorboats in the beginning and thought it might boost tourism, but has now realised how harmful it is to the environment, livelihoods and tourism.

On World Wetlands Day 2015, Pokhara's lakes, including Phewa, Begnas, Rupa, Gude, Khaste, Niureni, Dipang, Kamal Pokhari

and Maidi were included in the List of Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance. The nine lakes are listed as the Lake Cluster of Pokhara spanning 64,514 hectares.

Wetland ecosystems are crucial habitats for migratory birds, fish, amphibians and vegetation. Nepal's 10 wetlands including the Lake Cluster of Pokhara are protected under the Ramsar Convention.

All nine lakes of Pokhara were already in danger due to pollution, encroachment and overdevelopment. Businessman Ganesh Pariyar frequently sees fuel spillage from motorboats on the previously pristine Begnas Lake.

"The peace of the lake and surrounding areas is constantly disturbed by visitors shouting along to music blaring from the

speakers of the motorboats," Pariyar adds.

Nepal's Local Government Operation Act 2017 stipulates that the local government has the authority to permit and regulate tourism business operations. However, the Begnas Lake Boat Traders Committee only applied for a permit three months after it began to operate the motorboats.

There are concerns over the local government's commitment to protecting the lake's wetland ecosystem as Pokhara Metropolitan City wants to introduce 20 kinds of water sports to promote tourism in Begnas — including the operation of three-tier engine-powered boats on the lake.

The National Wetland Policy 2012 states that environmental impact assessments be done before plans for development

and construction in and around wetland areas. No such report was done at Begnas Lake.

Bishal Ghimire, secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forest and Environment of Gandaki Province, admits that even small-scale projects like motor boats on lakes require a basic environmental study.

However, there is little communication between the local and provincial governments, and Begnas residents complain that the local government does not care about what is happening to their pristine lake.

Begnas is not as well-known as Phewa Lake, but that is now changing. Says Manoj Gurung: "It is really important for us to protect Begnas to leave it for the next generation, just like previous generations did for us." 🇳🇵



**NMB BANK**  
एनएमबी बैंक



## Indian disaster relief

Two Indian Air Force C-130 aircraft landed at Nepalganj airport with consignment of over 20 tonnes of emergency tents and tarpaulin sheets, blankets and sleeping bags as well as essential medicines and medical equipment for Karnali earthquake. Indian Ambassador Naveen Srivastava handed over the material to Deputy Prime Minister Purna Bahadur Khadka. India had also played a first responder after the 2015 earthquake dispatching six helicopters for rescue and relief.

Meanwhile, Nabil Bank has donated Rs10 million of relief materials for Jajarkot earthquake survivors, and handed them to the District Disaster Management Committee in Jajarkot. NMB Bank is donating Rs5 million for the Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund to support survivors in Jajarkot which was struck by a 6.4M tremor last Friday. At least 157 people have died, most of them children and women while hundreds of others are injured. Unilever Nepal is also rushing a consignment of Horlicks, soups, medicine and medical aid, 700 blankets, 250 tents, and additional dried food procured locally.

## Livon Protein Shampoo

Livon has introduced a new line of protein-enriched shampoos in Nepal in collaboration with actresses Muna Gauchan and Shraddha Suwal. Livon Protein Shampoo will be available in three different variants: Nourishing Care, Anti-Hairfall and Damage Repair, all of which the brand says will help mend the harm done by pollution including that of the dust.

## X-AGE for Nepali cricket

X-AGE Nepal is awarding Rs1 million to the Men's T20 Cricket Team, ground staff, and the Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN) in recognition of their performance in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Final Asia Qualifier and their subsequent qualification for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in 2024. X-AGE Nepal also offered a 50% discount on all its products exclusively on Daraz Nepal on 5th November from 6-7PM.

## Ather Space

Vaidya Energy with Indian electric two-wheeler manufacturer Ather Energy is inaugurating an Experience



Centre, Ather Space in Naxal where visitors can explore the variants of the bestselling electric scooter, the 450X which is priced at Rs385,000 while a test ride can scheduled at atherenergy.com.np. Vaidya Energy has already installed Ather's fast charging point, the Ather Grid at the Ather Space and plans to install nine more across Kathmandu by January 2024.

## Global IME Deputy CEO



Suman Pokharel has been appointed Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Global IME Bank. Pokharel has more than two decades of experience working in the banking and financial sector in Nepal. He also previously served as the senior vice president of IME Group and was CEO of Nepal's first remittance company, IME Limited.



## F1 Soft CFO

Abhish Acharya has been appointed Group Chief Finance Officer of Nepal's leading fintech company, F1 Soft. A chartered accountant, Acharya was the head of finance at Lakshmi Sunrise Bank for 10 years where he specialised in financial fund and investment.

## Seres showroom

Seres which was recognised as the World's Fastest Growing Automobile Brand in 2023 by Brand Finance Automotive Industry has opened its second state-of-the-



art showroom in Nepal in Thasikhel, Lalitpur. The brand is committed to innovation in electric vehicles and the showroom features its popular EV lineup.

## Tihar with Ncell

Ncell has announced a short film competition themed 'Bhai Tika' where participants were required to produce a 3-5 minutes-long short film capturing the bond between a brother and a sister. The winner will receive Rs100,000 in cash while the first and second runner-ups will receive Rs75,000 and Rs50,000 respectively.



## 28 years of Prismark

Prismark Marketing which specialises in Integrated Marketing Communication for Media Buying and Management for Multinational Corporations (MNCs), Banking and Financial Institutions (BFIs), International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), Corporate Houses, and Governmental Sectors is celebrating its 28th year. Prismark aims to continue pioneering strategies through innovative marketing solutions to set new industry standards.



# Two women in a boat and some tea

A dragonfly perches on the oar and she pauses briefly, lets it alight on a bundle of grass parked on the side of the boat, and then rows again

Chandraa had to be carried down the hillside on a makeshift stretcher, as she went into labour. The pain she experienced at the time wasn't taken away by the bright blueness of the October sky above her or the singing of the birds on the trees.



SUBURBAN TALES  
Pratibha Tuladhar

As the men hurried her down the hillside on the stretcher, the jolts only made her pain worse. She wondered if she would make it to hospital on time or if like her friend, Sukundara, she too would end up giving birth to her baby on a boat. She decided that to drip into the Begnas through the boat was not going to be her fate. In response, her water broke as they scurried downhill. They halted and the women crouched beside her to help her and there, in the middle of the forest, in the Begnas valley, Chandraa's daughter was born.

"She's 16 now and she's in class ten," Chandraa says. "My son is 12 and he was born in the hospital. I wasn't going to risk birthing in a forest the second time."

The oars push into the water and away as Chandraa works her way across the lake. "You tell me where you want to go and I'll take you there," she says. I ask her to row closer to the thicket and we drift along the edge of the lake where the shore meets the forest— we're far out in a deserted corner. No other boats in sight, it's Chandraa and I, and the cicadas, at their loudest.

A dragonfly perches on the oar and she pauses briefly, lets it alight on a bundle of grass on the side of the boat, and then rows again.

"I don't want my children to have to work as hard as I have had to and so they're both going to go to college and work in offices," she says. And so, Chandraa takes up extra work when it is available. She explains how rare a ride is during low-season, and that while she charges 800 per ride, she only gets to pocket 200.

I ask if she spends some of that money on herself. "On my children," she says. Chandraa is a full-time farmer, but on days when the field work wraps up, she picks her bag, umbrella and hat, and sets downhill to the lake in the hope of finding a tourist to ferry around.

"This is easier than field work and sometimes I meet nice people who like to talk and ask questions," Chandraa says. But the conversation quickly turns and she starts to dart questions at me.

"What happened to your hair, madam?" she asks. Old age, I say. She laughs: "I can't tell if you coloured your hair or if you're really old."

I am old. We laugh some more.

...



PRATIBHA TULADHAR

Januka joins me on the park bench by the lake.

"It is impossible," she sighs. "They all owe me money and say they can only pay me tomorrow. And now I have no money." At first, it sounds as though she's talking to herself, but I soon notice it is directed at anyone who will sympathise. Once she is done settling her twin flasks on the bench, she looks at me and smiles.

"Are you selling tea?" I ask.

She says: "Yes. But I have run out of tea today."

By this time, I'm holding out some money in her direction. She looks at the money, smiles and shakes her head. No more tea.

I make an offer: "How about you keep the money for two cups of tea and my friend and I will meet you here tomorrow so you can give us some tea." She stares at the notes for a while, then takes them from me and repeatedly says: "Please make sure to come by tomorrow."

It is after two days that I am finally able to launch Mission Januka and scour the lakeside for

her. When I finally run into her again, she's sitting in a dark patch by the lake, under a tree, handing out teas in paper cups. Eh, she says when she sees me: "Why didn't you come the other day? Right right, the storm! It lasted two days, no?"

"Where's your friend?" She tilts her head to check as though she were expecting someone to emerge from behind me.

It's just me, I say.

Januka pulls out a paper cup, uncorks her thermos and pours me a cup of tea. The wind has started to gather around us again. "It's crazy weather again, no?"

"Yes, makes me think of the year we had the earthquake," she responds. "That's right. My family is from near Barpak and we moved here after the earthquake. I go to school here now." Januka says she makes around 400 rupees a day selling tea after school. "It's not much, but the work is easy and the money is useful," she says.

I ask if it is safe for her to walk home at night. Januka explains she usually waits for other vendors like her to finish their sales and walk back together to their rented rooms.

I close my fingers over the paper cup. The liquid is warm against my hands. It begins to pitter-patter. I'll head to my hotel now, I say. "Will you be safe walking alone, madam?" Januka asks me. "If you're safe, I'm safe, I guess." We exchange smiles. Hers is the smile of a child, awkward but generous.

Almost suddenly, I'm filled with a sense of joy that only a cup of sweet, fragrant tea could have brought me on a rainy evening. I sip the tea and walk on in the drizzle, talking to random street dogs and thinking about Januka counting her money at the end of each day. 🇳🇵

ADVENTURE  
NEVER LOOKED  
SO INVITING.



HILUX





# Small is bountiful

New book on Nepal's hydropower shows building capacity was more important than building infrastructure

■ **Bikash Pandey**

Since the 1950s Nepalis have dreamt of developing the country's enormous hydropower potential for industrialisation and export to India.

Nepal chose to avoid the path followed by Bhutan of handing over design, financing, and construction of hydropower to India. Policy makers tried instead to maintain control by soliciting assistance from bilateral donors and multilateral development banks to finance power projects using grants and concessionary loans.

But as the size of investments increased, it resulted in greater reliance on international aid and technical assistance. Projects were designed by global consultants and constructed by international contractors through competitive bidding and once completed were handed over by the government to Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) to own and operate.

By the 1980s a flaw in this approach had become clear: it had created another kind of dependence and loss of control. The electricity produced was expensive since these projects, although funded through grants or loans on concessionary terms, were transferred to NEA's books at the full cost of the assets which needed to produce returns.

A more debilitating effect was that almost no technical or financing capacity was transferred to NEA for the next power plant without more aid. As international assistance was always in short supply, Nepal's hydropower development proceeded slowly and the electrification rate lagged at 15% in 2000. There was little prospect for exporting power since it was so expensive, and there was chronic domestic shortage.

In his book *What Went Right: Sustainability versus Dependence in Nepal's Hydropower Development*, Mark Liechty, professor of anthropology and history at the University of Illinois in Chicago, skillfully narrates the story of Nepal's alternative hydropower development.

At the centre are Norwegian missionary Odd Hoftun and his colleagues, who over the course of five decades did not just build power projects but laid the foundation for a vibrant domestic energy sector with thousands of competent Nepali engineers and technicians, hundreds of independent power producers, and dozens of construction companies, equipment manufacturers and



The Kulekhani Dam opened in 1982, and is still the only large reservoir project in Nepal.

NTARCHIVE

engineering consultancy firms.

Liechty recalls the strategy to develop hydropower that was quietly taking shape in Butwal in parallel with the Kathmandu-centric public sector-led model funded by the county's major donors. The 'Butwal Model' emphasised vocational training and learning opportunities in the manufacture of components and by building actual power plants.

Training of skilled manpower was born out of necessity in a region of the country with no industrial base, very few schools, and certainly none that imparted specialised technical skills required for hydropower development. The second element was the formation of local private companies to design, construct, and operate hydropower projects initially to electrify the training institute and supply nearby urban and rural communities, and eventually to feed surplus power to the NEA grid as the Butwal companies constructed larger power plants.

As the companies grew in size and sophistication, they attracted increasing numbers of Nepali engineers who sought more a challenging professional environment than at NEA. International experts worked as volunteers alongside Nepalis training technicians, managers and entrepreneurs on the job.

The training was as important as the construction of hydropower plants. The power projects were also initially funded with international aid, but it was sympathetic to the vision of using project design and construction

as an opportunity to build lasting human capacity in Nepal.

Hoftun came to Nepal as a Norwegian Christian missionary and was responsible for conceiving and initiating the Butwal hydropower development model. He died aged 95 earlier this year.

Hoftun believed in frugal use of resources, a framework of moral business practices, and a belief that private companies working under ethical principles were the most efficient vehicles for Nepal's economic development. That philosophy resonated with Hoftun's Nepali colleagues such as Balaram Pradhan, who may not have shared his religious faith, but found strong overlap with their own commitment to national development.

Hoftun first came to Nepal in 1958 to build Tansen Mission Hospital, the only modern medical facility in the region at the time. He had to train masons, carpenters and electricians, realising that he had developed a cadre of technicians.

He established the Butwal Technical Institute (BTI) 40km south of Tansen to provide on-the-job training to Nepali teenagers in metal welding, carpentry and electrical vocational skills. Requiring a reliable power source for BTI, he invited the skilled workers trained in Tansen to construct, in stages, the 1 MW Tinau project starting in 1965, with the first 50kW completed in 1970 and the final stage in 1978.

The Butwal Power Company (BPC) was formed in 1965 as an electrical utility to oversee construction as well as to operate the power plant and supply power

to BTI along with the residents and small-scale industries of Butwal. This cycle of building ever larger hydropower projects and training more people went on for 30 years, with the 5MW Andhi Khola (1990) and the 12MW Jhimruk (1994).

Hoftun's approach of starting with labour intensive technique to dig tunnels and utilising refurbished second-hand hydropower equipment from Norway resulted in Tinau and Andhi Khola being built at a fraction of the cost of power plants being constructed for NEA. 100% construction by Nepali companies meant even the Jhimruk power plant which used mechanised drilling and all new electro-mechanical equipment was completed at around one third the per MW cost of larger NEA projects.

This alternative model came with challenges. Liechty details conflicts Hoftun faced with fellow missionaries who believed their commitment was to serve the poor in Nepal through health and education rather than economic development through private companies. Working with government meant getting permissions at every step from bureaucrats who did not always agree with Hoftun's philosophy.

Liechty also documents how the model hits its limits when Hoftun attempted to mobilise financing for the 60MW Khimti in partnership with international private companies, the World Bank and Asian Development Bank.

Khimti was eventually financed and constructed after meeting all the requirements of international

lenders but at significantly higher cost, and in the process BPC's ownership came down from an initially planned 50% to just 15%.

I was one of the Nepali engineers that joined the Butwal effort after completing my overseas engineering degree and saw firsthand how Nepali companies and technicians were able to construct high quality hydropower projects at affordable costs.

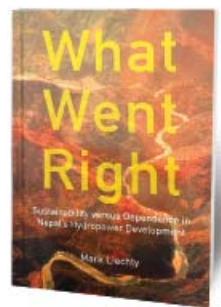
That experience moved me to form the Alliance for Energy in 1993 with other like-minded activists to oppose the construction of the 201MW Arun III being planned by NEA using the conventional model with no prospect for increasing national capacity and reducing aid dependence. Our concern was that at a price tag of \$1.1 billion the project was unaffordable for Nepal compared to viable alternatives.

The World Bank and other funders withdrew their support to Arun III in 1995, accepting NEA could not satisfactorily meet its environmental, social and management responsibilities. The Alliance had proposed donor financed alternatives, but even without them Nepal now has a vibrant and competitive hydropower sector with over two hundred Independent Power Producers with financing from dozens of Nepali banks.

Liechty's book provides important documentation of what it takes to do good development in one of the world's poorest countries – in contrast with conventional development assistance as practiced by international donors when they prioritise building infrastructure rather than building capacity.

It may be slow but building domestic capacity is the only way for countries to develop sustainably. This book will hopefully inspire a new generation of activists, entrepreneurs, engineers, and economists to demand that development aid coming in their name be required to meet a higher bar. 🇳🇵

*Bikash Pandey, is the Global Director for Clean Energy, Winrock International. Opinions expressed are his own.*



*What Went Right: Sustainability versus Dependence in Nepal's Hydropower Development by Mark Liechty Cambridge University Press, 2022 Hardback: \$120*

## Nepal's hydropower goes international

At Scottish trade fair, Nepali companies showcased their expertise in building hydroelectric plants around the world

■ **Joti Giri** in Edinburgh

Nepali hydropower industry is poised to play a bigger role in Nepal's energy transition to meet its 2045 net zero target.

Nepal Hydropower Association (NHA) last month hosted a 'Made in Nepal' booth at the Hydro23 conference in Edinburgh which was attended by 1,000 delegates from 70 countries. There were over 30 delegates from Nepal.

The Nepal booth showcased and promoted Nepali hydropower expertise, experience and its ability to offer a diverse range of services across the whole hydropower value chain in emerging markets for projects up to 100MW. This was a show of Nepal's new confidence in the experience its technicians and engineers have gained in the past decades.

With its natural geographical advantage, Nepal actually has over 100 years of experience in hydro-

electricity, with Pharping being only the second hydropower plant in Asia when it was built in 1911.

In his new book *What Went Right: Sustainability versus Dependence in Nepal's Hydropower Development*, US professor Mark Liechty explains why Nepal's hydropower sector has been such a success among the many development models that Nepal's donors experimented with over the last seven decades (see review above).

Liechty traces the history of indigenous capacity in Nepal's hydropower with capital financing, tender bid process, EIA, engineering consulting, construction, generation, maintenance, transmission to distribution. Nepalis also gained experience in project management and delivery along with increased sophistication of the local high precision machining and tunnelling expertise in the challenging Himalayan geology and climate.

Nepal's Ambassador to the UK Gyan Chandra Acharya said: "Nepal's hydro industry has a unique position and readiness to contribute to reducing greenhouse gas in South

Asia and beyond. This global interaction can only be mutually beneficial."

There are now 130 hydroelectric plants in Nepal delivering nearly 3,000MW, with another 240 plants under construction. Such an experience and a steep learning curve in a short development period has meant that the sector has proven that it can build hydro projects at speed and at a competitive price globally.

Evidence of this is the trend towards Chinese contractors outsourcing some of their hydro engineering design work to Nepali engineering consultancies. The output and competitive consulting fees proves that Nepal's engineering design is ready to do business globally.

Nepal's Energy Secretary Dinesh Ghimire told the Edinburgh gathering: "Made in Nepal can be a platform to share Nepal's successes and tell the world that we are ready to do business by selling its hydropower building expertise."

Hydro Consult Engineering, a company with 30 years experience in Nepal promoted its services and capabilities in

Edinburgh. It has completed projects in Pakistan, and two small new plants are in the pipeline in Kenya and Uganda. Hydro's CEO Manohar Shrestha said: "We are excited with our international projects. They are challenging, but we are confident that these projects are a growth and learning opportunities for us."

Conference organiser Alison Bartle, publisher of the journal *Hydropower and Dams*, said that the world is becoming aware of Nepal's speed of advancement within the sector despite its geological and geopolitical challenges.

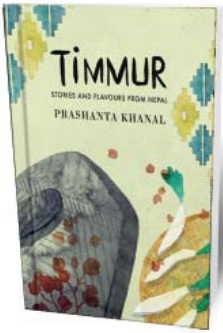
"Nepal is fast becoming a hydro hub in the region," she added. "We are especially happy that Nepal is cultivating cross border partnerships and exploring electricity trade with India and Bangladesh. It is a game changer."

Delegates said the next steps were for NHA and the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation to support the industry's growth, and project Nepal was a model for successful energy transition at climate summits including at the COP28 in Dubai this month.



# 10 books for Tihar

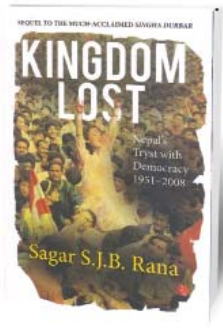
Here are the recent 10 books selected by the Nepali Times team for your Tihar reading. From heritage restoration and preservation to exploring Nepal’s culinary diversity, from foreign diplomacy to its strategic location between India and China, from Himalayan architecture and humanitarian support to hard-earned democracy, the listicle has something for anyone looking to learn more about Nepal in-depth.



*Timmur: Stories and Flavours of Nepal*  
By Prashanta Khanal  
FinePrint, 2022  
297 pages  
Regular hardback Rs2,500  
Special hardback with slipcase Rs3,000

**Timmur: Stories and Flavours of Nepal**  
Nepali cuisine is so much more than dal-bhat-tarkari and momo. With over 100 ethnic communities, the country’s culinary range is as vast as its biodiversity. Prashanta Khanal’s cookbook *Timmur: Stories and Flavours of Nepal* presents selected recipes from 12 ethnic groups, with unknown and overlooked dishes from around the country. While the book does not represent the entirety of Nepali cuisine, it is a fine example of what Nepal has to offer, and perhaps a step towards having more than a few well-known dishes represent the country in the world’s gastronomic atlas. You might want to try cooking some these dishes this Tihar.

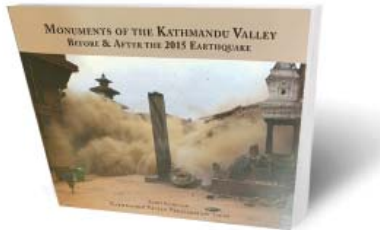
**Kingdom Lost: Nepal’s Tryst with Democracy 1951-2008**  
Kingdom Lost: Nepal’s Tryst with Democracy 1951-2008 chronicles Nepal’s tumultuous road to democracy spanning 70 years after the Ranas. Two players stand out in the sequel: BP Koirala and King



*Kingdom Lost: Nepal's Tryst with Democracy 1951-2008*  
by Sagar SJB Rana  
Rupa Publications, 2023  
326 pages Rs952

Mahendra. Kingdom Lost stops in 2008 but readers would agree that a third book depicting Nepal’s rocky transition to peace and federalism, the stalled transitional justice mechanism, the new Constitution and the rise of alternative politicians is due. Sagar Rana’s previous book, *Singha Durbar*, is an inside story of the Rana era by a descendant of Chandra Shumsher, grandson of Gen Baber Shumsher, son of educationist Mrigendra Shumsher and brother of Bharat Shumsher.

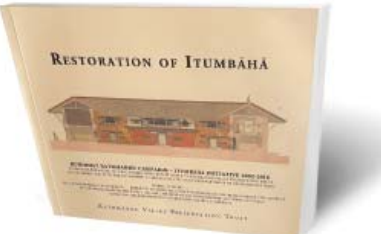
**Monuments of the Kathmandu Valley: Before & After the 2015 earthquake**  
Within minutes of the 7.8M earthquake in 2015, Nepal’s foremost heritage architect Rohit Ranjitkar was out helping rescue not just those trapped under the rubble but also mobilising the community to safeguard many of the artefacts that fell. He has now put together a voluminous documentation of the repair, restoration and rebuilding of Kathmandu Valley’s monuments after the 2015 earthquake, a post-mortem of how the historic temples, shrines, monasteries, stupas, rest houses and Rana palaces were rebuilt from the



*Monuments of the Kathmandu Valley: Before & After the 2015 Earthquake Achievement in Seven Years*  
by Rohit Ranjitkar  
Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust, 2023

ground up—with both good and bad examples. The 625-page volume is lavishly illustrated with photographs and drawings of the reconstruction process including that of Machindranath Temple in Bungmati, the Indrayani Temple built in 1792, Kasthamandap, Boudhanath stupa, and more.

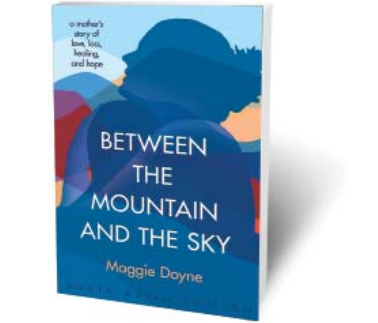
**Restoration of Itumbaha**  
Seven of Kathmandu Valley’s temple complexes are on UNESCO’s list of World Heritage Sites, and Itumbaha is one of five main Newar Buddhist monastic enclaves in Kathmandu. Itumbaha has existed for at least 800 years, and is one of only three monastic structures in Kathmandu Valley that have preserved their original architecture for so long. The historical and cultural importance of Itumbaha and its meticulous rehabilitation from 2002-2016 is the subject of



*Restoration of Itumbaha Buddhist Kathmandu Campaign — Itumbaha Initiative 2002-2016*  
Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust, 2023  
200 pages

this book *Restoration of Itumbaha*. With contributions from a star cast of heritage conservationists and architects like Niels Gutschow, Thomas Schrom and Rohit Ranjitkar, the book can serve as a useful guide for first-time visitors and frequenters alike.

**Between the Mountain and the Sky**  
Maggie Doyne was a wide-eyed 19-year-old in 2006 when she came to Nepal as a backpacker. While walking along a dry river bed in Surkhet, she spotted 6-year-old Hima Tamata helping her mother break boulders for a construction



*Between the Mountain and the Sky: A Mother's Story of Love, Loss, Healing, and Hope*  
by Maggie Doyne  
Safu Publications, 2023  
(South Asian Edition)  
251 pages  
Rs700

contractor, and she became the reason Doyne stayed in Nepal to help disadvantaged children. 17 years later, the act of enrolling Hima in school has grown into the BlinkNow Foundation which has educated over 500 children now. Along the way, Doyne was named CNN Hero in 2015, and has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Forbes*, and this newspaper. She was also named Woman of the Year by *Glamour* magazine. Published in 2022, Doyne’s biography is an emotional coming-of-age story of how one gap year student can change the world.

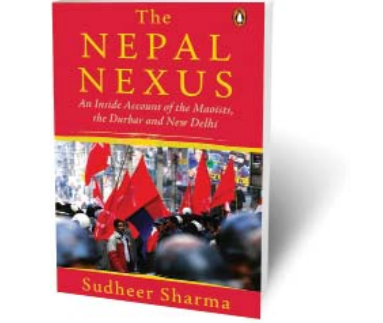
**Himalayan Style: Shelters & Sanctuaries**  
The Himalaya may be famous for the world’s highest mountains and the people who climb them, but this 3,000km range has also evolved its own distinctive art and architecture. Kathmandu-based photographer Thomas L Kelly and author Claire Burkert collaborated



*Himalayan Style: Shelters & Sanctuaries*  
by Thomas L Kelly and Claire Burkert  
Mandala Publishing, 2022  
304 pages  
Hardback: \$49.99

to document the elegance of Himalayan design, style and culture across Pakistan, India, Bhutan, China and Nepal. First published in 2014, the 2022 edition of the coffee-table book updates the content with new museums that preserve art and precious objects, and public gardens that are oases in the urban sprawl of Himalayan towns. In essence, a book by non-Nepalis to remind Nepalis about the richness and treasures of Himalayan style and our way of life.

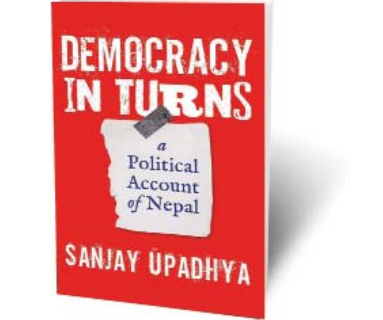
**The Nepal Nexus**  
This is the English translation and updated version of the 2013 bestseller *Prayogshala* by editor Sudheer Sharma. It offers readers a vivid account of Nepal’s ten-year conflict, the 2006 people’s movement, the fragile transition that followed, to the Maoists’ subsequent rise to power. It has gripping revelations about the dynamics between the palace, Parliament, the (Royal) Nepal Army, Nepal Police and the Maoists between 1996 and 2006. One of the highlights of Sharma’s book is the



*The Nepal Nexus*  
*An Inside Account of the Maoists, the Durbar, and New Delhi*  
by Sudheer Sharma  
Penguin, 2019  
521 pages  
Rs1118

treatment of Nepal’s relations with its neighbours, in particular India’s role in helping the Maoists join mainstream politics – apparently as a way to weaken a nationalist monarchy as well as to show India’s own Maoist revolutionaries that there was an electoral path to power.

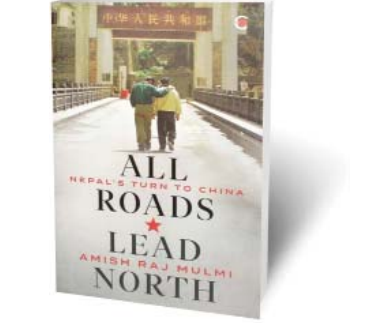
**Democracy in Turns**  
Sanjay Upadhyia’s book looks back at the country’s struggle to construct a new democratic identity under seven constitutions in seven decades. The author casts a critical look at the country’s monarchy, the decline of the political parties as well as the rise of ideology-



*Democracy in Turns: A Political Account of Nepal*  
by Sanjay Upadhyia  
FinePrint Books, 2023  
www.fineprint.com.np  
280 pages

personality politics including the Maoists, and non-political actors and their significant influence over the national discourse. The book also analyses Nepal’s corruption conundrum including the alleged increase in corruption post-Panchyat, electoral politics, and how the anti-graft body CIAA found itself at the centre of politics while issues of transitional justice and human rights were cast aside.

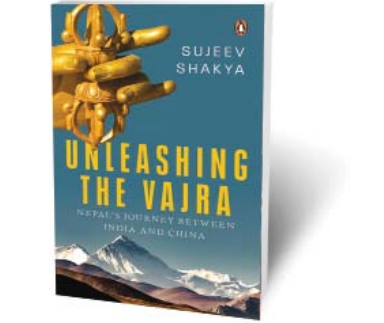
**All Roads Lead North**  
The 2015 Indian Blockade is often considered the turning point in Nepal’s relations with China for transboundary trade, energy and infrastructure. But Nepal did not turn northwards overnight. All Roads Lead North is as much



*All Roads Lead North*  
*Nepal's Turn To China*  
by Amish Raj Mulmi  
Context, 2021  
320 pages  
Hardcover: Rs1278

about China’s rise as a global superpower as it is about Nepal’s foreign relations. It delves into the historical and cultural ties between the two countries. Tibetan guerrilla fighters, failed coup leaders, trans-Himalayan traders and territorial disputes make for an interesting read with the writer primarily reflecting on the suffocating embrace of India and China next door to Nepal.

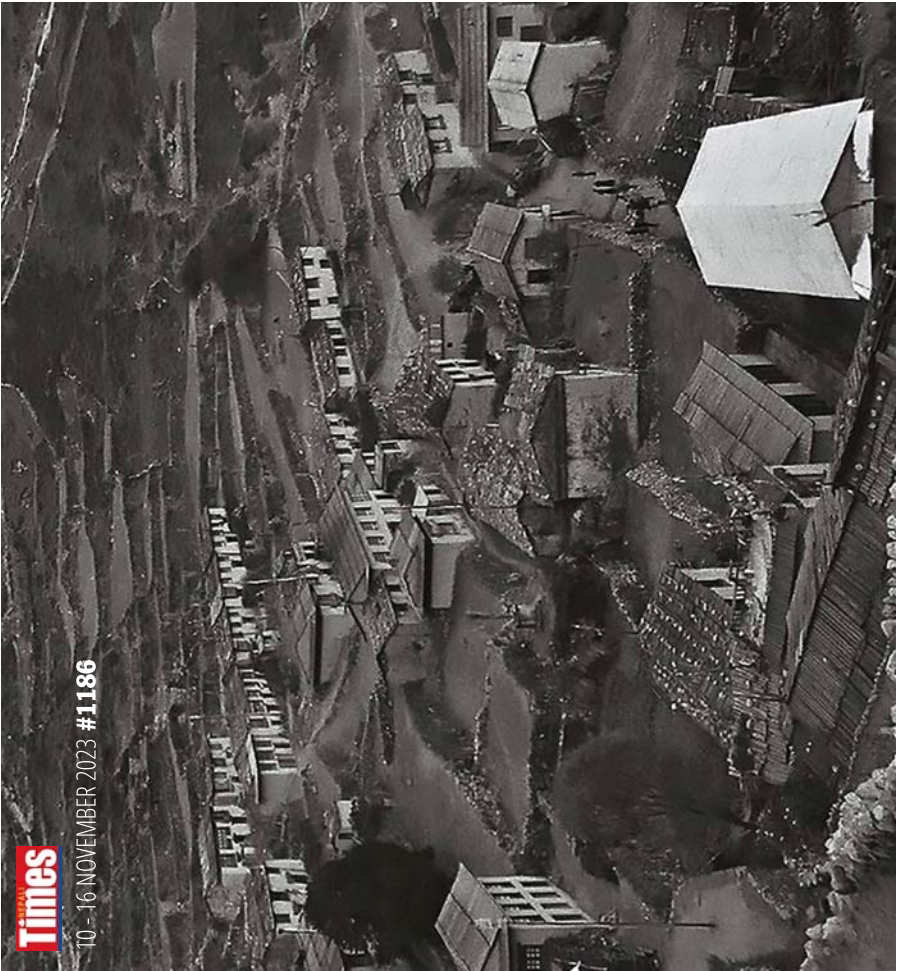
**Unleashing the Vajra**  
Nepal’s great advantage is its strategic location between India and China, more so now as the two giants emerge as the next global superpowers. Historically, Nepal has been at its most prosperous when it has leveraged this geographical position but rarely have our politicians played the game right, instead pitting China and India against each other, and in turn, losing in spades. What Nepal needs to do is hitch its wagon to the fast-moving engines to its north and south, writes former columnist of this paper, Sujeev Shakya. He analyses the social, political and cultural aspects underlying the current state of Nepal to strategise



*Unleashing the Vajra*  
*Nepal's Journey Between India and China*  
by Sujeev Shakya  
Penguin, 2019  
414 pages  
Rs958

the recalibrations required to capitalise on its location while also arguing that economic transformations cannot be realised through money and management skills alone but have to be driven by societal transformation.





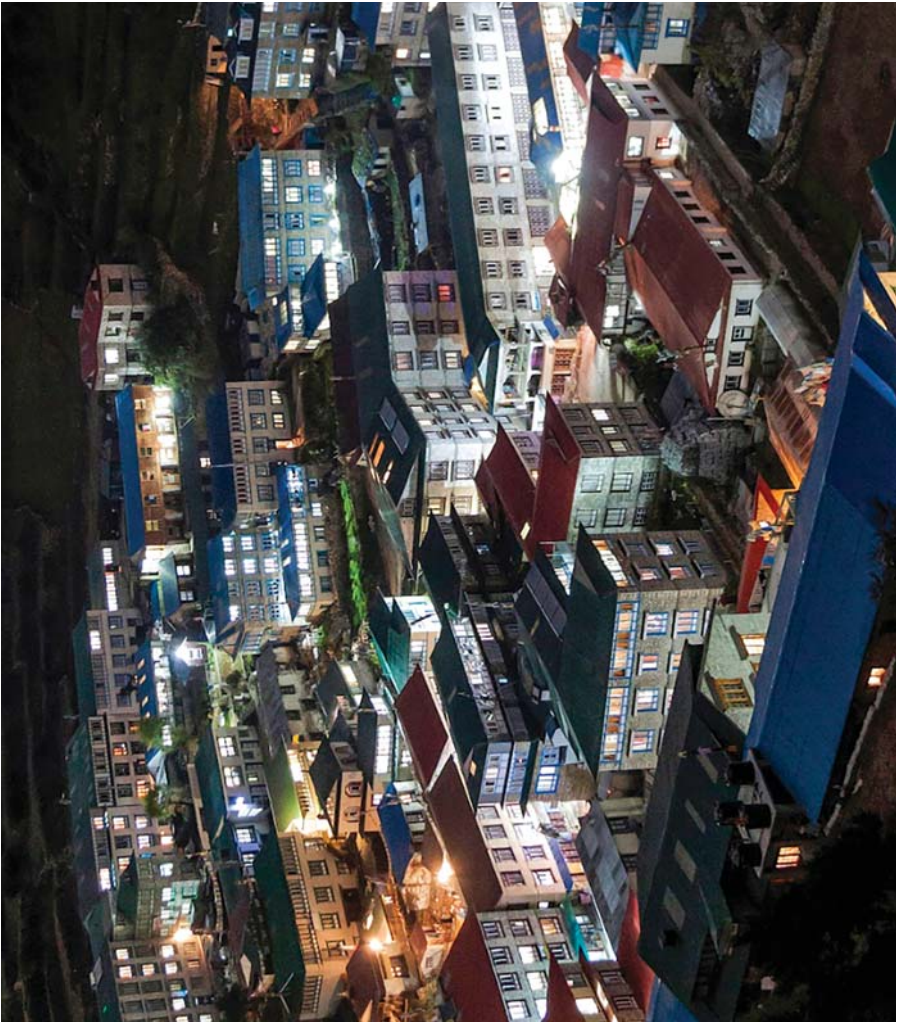
LS SHERPA

Namche Bazar in 1976 when hardly 1,000 tourists were visiting Khumbu. - Roofs were made of fir shingles held down with stones. Even then at least five buildings had corrugated metal roofs. In 1976 the Sagarmatha National Park was set up.



LS SHERPA

Namche in 2018. By 2019, the number of lodges had grown to 62, and annual tourist numbers were approaching 50,000.



LS SHERPA

Namche at night in 2011. The electrified town 11 years ago had all-night bars, restaurants, and dozens of lodges.



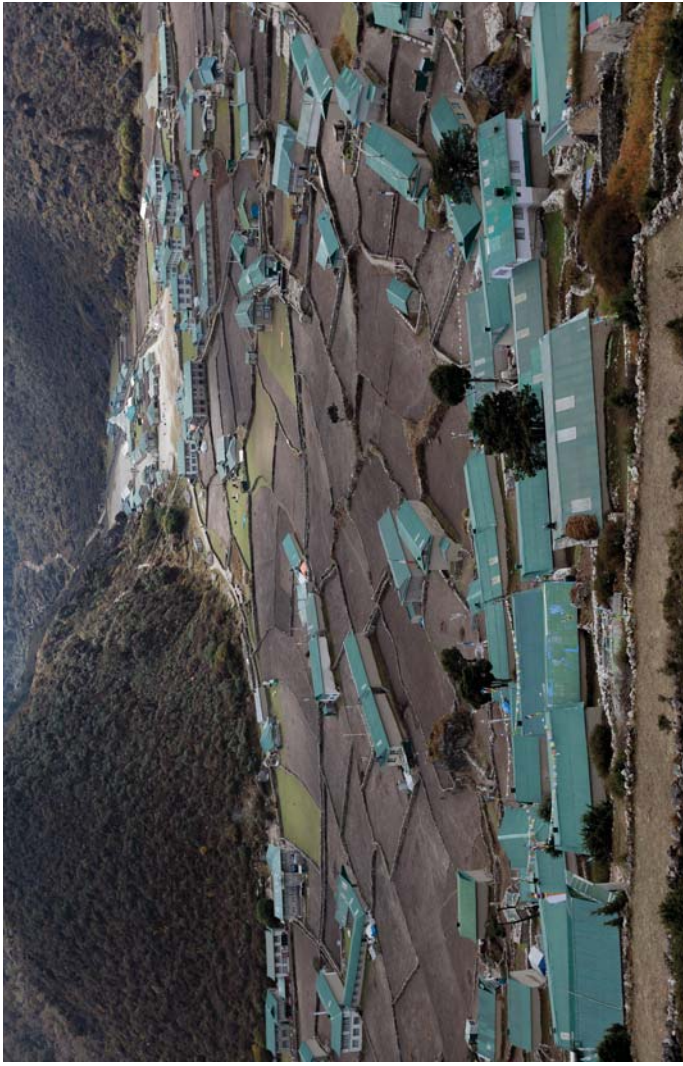
C VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF

View from Khumjung monastery in 1964, when the Khumjung School had not yet been built.



ALTON BYERS

Houses had more than tripled in Khumjung by 2007. Khumjung School and satellite buildings had been constructed.



LS SHERPA

Khumjung in 2018, with more lodges along the main Khumjung to Khunde trail.

# KHUMBU SINCE

35mm negatives appear remarkably clear (it was necessary to use the prints of the negatives because the negatives themselves had been lost).

Their own replicas of the historic photographs are outstanding. The photographs have been expanded from the original 133 to 228, many of them never before published and taken by the first western climbers, climber-scientists, anthropologists, and development workers to have

the early pioneers of mountaineering, survey, and conservation in the Khumbu. They include John Hunt, Charles Evans, Fritz Müller, Erwin Schneider, Helmut Heuberger, C von Fürer Haimendorf, Charles Houston, Bruce Jeffries, and Nick Ledgard.

The book includes a foreword by the late Venerable Ngawang Tenzing Zangpo Rinpoche, Abbot of Tengboche Monastery, who reminds us of “ how quickly our culture and landscapes can

the perspectives of one author who has studied the region for over 50 years. and the other who was born there.

The book then leads us on a tour of the Khumbu region over time, from Junbesi in 1954, to the Lukla airstrip, to Chermading, Phakding, Namche, Tengboche, Dingboche, to the far reaches of the Imja, Gokyo, and Thame valleys. Dramatic changes in villages from sleepy traditional communities to

In spite of nearly 200 years of mountaineering history throughout the world, strategies to effectively manage human waste at high altitudes continue to elude the mountaineer and development practitioner alike. Khumbu Since 1950 is thus a reminder that, in spite of much progress, much work remains to ensure a thorough collaboration between the local mountain people and visiting supporters toward sustainable mountain development.



# SHINGU 1950

■ Jack D Ives

Alton C Byers and Lhakpa Sonam Sherpa have teamed up to expand, update, and improve the first edition of Khumbu Since 1950 published in 2017. The result is a first-rate photographic documentation of the dramatic changes which have occurred in the villages, forests, and glaciers of the Mt Everest region over the past 73 years.

Both the historic and recent photo replicas are of excellent quality, and even the more than 70-year-old enlargements acquired from contact prints of

the first western climbers, climber-scientists, anthropologists, and development workers to have visited the region (the lack of historic photographs taken by Sherpas reflects the lack of personal cameras at the time).

The resultant collection, many of them panoramas originally taken by photogrammetric cameras in the 1950s, covers the fields of anthropology, human and physical geography, landscape change, climate change, and glaciology.

This leads to assessments of the impacts of the massive increase in trekking tourism and mountaineering since the early 1970s, together with the effects of current climate warming. It follows that the photographic collection is of vital importance as a historical document, and in the words of Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa "...could very well serve as the foundation for future monitoring, and subsequent management, of the Sagarmatha National Park and Buffer Zone's changing cultural and physical landscapes".

Byers and Sherpa introduce us to many of

Abbot of Tengboche Monastery, who reminds us of "...how quickly our culture and landscapes can change, and thus the importance of balancing this change with adequate protection of all living things."

The preface by Byers describes the evolution of the book, from his first visit to Khumbu as an undergraduate student in geography in 1973 to his more recent work documenting the impacts of climate change, especially the danger of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs).

Lhakpa Sonam Sherpa tells the story of how, in spite of losing his hearing to meningitis at 19, he has overcome the resultant challenges to become one of Nepal's foremost landscape photographers, the founder of the new Sherpa Culture Museum in Namche Bazar, and the recent recipient of a lifetime achievement award from the Government of Nepal.

A new chapter, Introduction to the Sagarmatha National Park and Buffer Zone, Khumbu, Nepal: Past Present, and Future introduces the reader to an updated account of the people, history, vegetation, and glaciers of the region, written from

people and visiting supporters toward sustainable mountain development.

Khumbu Since 1950 is a vital visual tool that will be appreciated and used by visitors, scholars, government, and development workers alike for years to come. The fact that it can now be updated by future Nepali scholars interested in the positive and negative aspects of change over time makes the book all the more valuable. 🇳🇵

*Jack D Ives is with the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Carleton University Ottawa, Canada. JackIves@Cuneil.Carleton.ca*

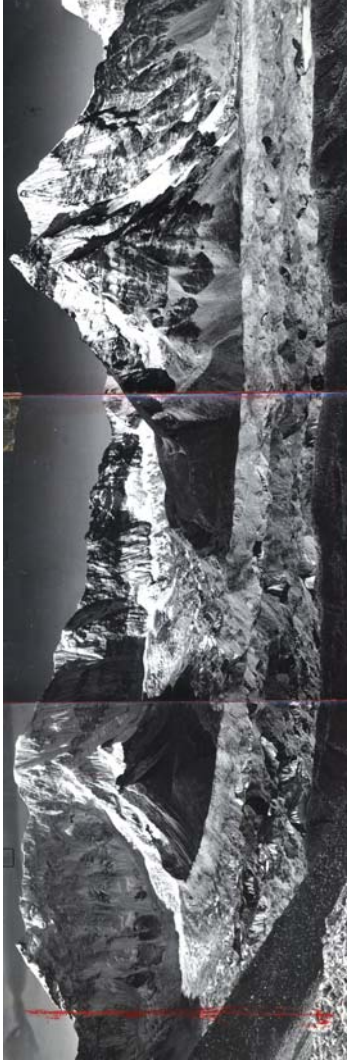


*Khumbu Since 1950: Cultural, Landscape, and Climate Change in the Sagarmatha (Mt Everest) National Park, Khumbu, Nepal (second edition) by Alton C Byers and Lhakpa Sonam Sherpa  
ECS Press Kathmandu, 2023  
200 pp \$25*



FRITZ WÜLLER

This photopoint along the trail from Sanesa to Tengboche provides testimony to the greening of many parts of the Khumbu region over the past 50 years. Taken in 1956, this photograph shows what appears be mostly bare shrub-grasslands on both the south and north-facing slopes of the Imja Khola.



ESCHNEIDER

Imja's debris-covered glacier in 1956 was typical of most large glaciers in Khumbu, a sign of glacial stagnation since the end of the Little Ice Age around 1870. A series of small meltwater ponds began to form in the early 1960s that have grown steadily over the past 50 years into the glacial lake seen today.



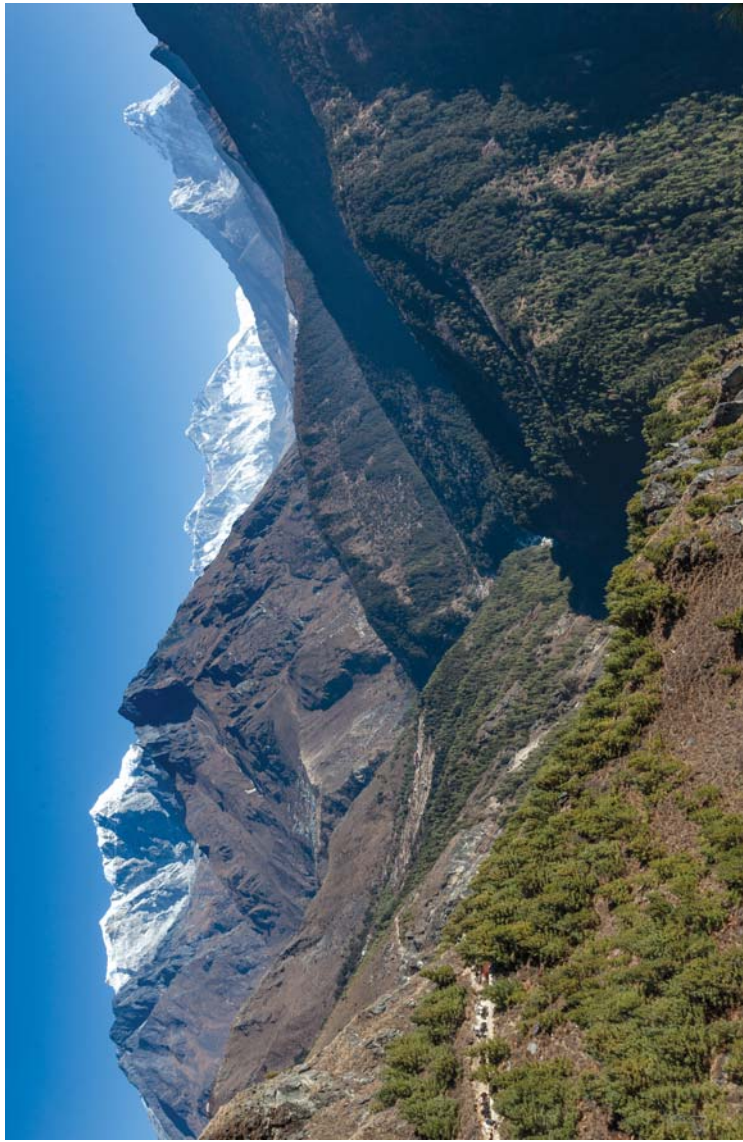
ALTON BYERS

By 2007, significant tree growth had occurred, especially on the north-facing slopes of the Imja Khola. The reason for this is not entirely clear but could include some combination of the new conservation policies brought in by the national park, the fact that the traditional shingo nawa system of natural resource management had never really died out, changes in livestock population perhaps due to a decreased use of cattle for milk and meat and their increased use as pack animals for trekkers and expeditions, and climate change with warming trends more conducive to tree growth.



ALTON BYERS

By 2012, Imja glacial lake measured over 2km in length, was 550m wide, had an average depth of 50m, a maximum depth of 150, and contained 75 million m³ of water. Its calving rate between 1992 and 2002 was 36 m/yr, and between 2002 and 2012 accelerated to 52 m/yr.



LS SHERPA

In 2018, the replication of Müller's 1956 photopoint revealed that even more tree growth had occurred in the interim.



ALTON BYERS

Imja glacial lake panorama in 2017.



EVENTS



**Kukur Tihar**  
During Kukur Tihar, pets and community dogs, revered as Yama Raj’s gatekeepers and man’s best friends, are worshipped and fed treats.  
*12 November*

**Laxmi Puja**  
Kukur Tihar and Laxmi puja fall on the same day this Tihar. On Laxmi Puja, Nepalis worship Laxmi, the goddess of wealth during the evening and pray for prosperity for their families.  
*12 November*



**Mha Puja**  
The Newa community worships the self on this day. People elsewhere pay homage to Gobhardhan, an avatar of Lord Krishna. It’s also a new year day: Nhu Daya Bhintuna in the Newa calendar.  
*14 November*

**Bhaitika**  
On Bhaitika, brothers and sisters celebrate their bond and pray for protection from Yama, the harbinger of death.  
*15 November*



**Chhath**  
Chhath is marked by communities in Nepal’s Tarai, and dedicated to the Sun God and his sister Chhathi Maiya. The festival is observed with ritual bathing in rivers and ponds and worshipping the setting and rising suns.  
*19 November*

DINING



**Lhakpa’s Chulo**  
Lhakpa’s Chulo offers a variety of Continental and Nepali cuisine. Pick any dish from the Swiss Rösti to the spinach and cheese momo.  
*Jhamsikhel (01) 5442986*

MUSIC

**Jazz night**  
This week’s live jazz session at Gypsy-Swing Patan will be an ensemble featuring Chakra Lama, Riken Maharjan, and Salik Maharjan on the guitar, Kshitiz Lama on the saxophone, Saroj Bhattarai on the violin and Prateek Pradhan on double bass.  
*10 November, 6pm-10pm, Saugal, Patan*



**UNB live**  
Watch Sikkimese rapper UNB perform live in Nepal for the first time along with a variety of other talent from across the entertainment world.  
*11 November, 7pm, Senate Club, Thamel*



**Kush Band**  
Grab some drinks and spend the evening with grunge rock band Kush as they take the stage at London Pub this weekend.  
*10 November, 8pm, London PUB, Darbar Marg*



**NS 1134**  
If you have no plans for Laxmi Puja listen to the band NS 1134 band, who will be live at KaShi Restaurant & Bar. Call for pre-booking.  
*12 November, 5pm onwards, KaShi Restaurant & Bar, Pharping, 9808014107/9841538376*

**Smsaara**  
Get free shots at Watering Hole for an evening during the pub’s Queen of the Night Wednesdays. Food and drinks will be accompanied by live music from Cambodia-based Nepali band Samsaara.  
*Wednesdays, Watering Hole, Naxal*



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

**Sam’s One Tree**  
Sam’s One Tree Cafe has mouthwatering appetizers, a perfect atmosphere and a big, shady tree like the name suggests. The sizzlers there are a must-have.  
*Darbar Marg (01) 4222636*

GETAWAY



**Hotel Annapurna View**  
Located at an altitude of 1600m, the hotel offers the picturesque scene of the snowy Annapurna mountain range and Phewa Lake and has great accommodations.  
*Sarangkot, Pokhara, 9860506786*

**Dhulikhel Mountain Resort**  
Dhulikhel Mountain Resort is the perfect getaway, from the blend of Newa-influenced bungalows to views of majestic mountain ranges. The resort also offers body massage and spa services, evening cultural dance programs, and appetising multi-cuisine food.  
*Dhulikhel (01) 4420774*



**Namu Buddha Resort**  
This traditional Newari style resort is perched on a hilltop with an amazing view of the Himalayas each morning. The peaceful, tranquil environment is also perfect for short hikes.  
*Namo Buddha, Phulbari, 9851106802*

**Kathmandu Guest House**  
Kathmandu Guest House is the place for trekkers for a rejuvenating stay. The buildings offer hospitable and comfortable accommodation, serene gardens and the guest house is only a short walk away from the Kathmandu Darbar Square.  
*Thamel (01) 4700632*



**Sapana Village Lodge**  
Wake up to witness elephants lumber through the forests, and stay amongst rich Thar and Chepang culture at the heart of Sauraha.  
*Sauraha, Chitwan (056) 580308*

**Turkish Kebabs**  
Head to Turkish Kebabs and Pizza Hub to try some authentic Turkish cuisine. Order the kebabs, or try the Turkish street food dhurum.  
*Ekantakuna (01) 5439733*



**Vino Bistro**  
Touted as the hub of French cheeses and imported wines in Nepal, Vino offers cheese platters, charcuterie, pastas and bruschetta, all paired with appropriate wines.  
*Lazimpat (01) 4435982*

WEEKEND WEATHER

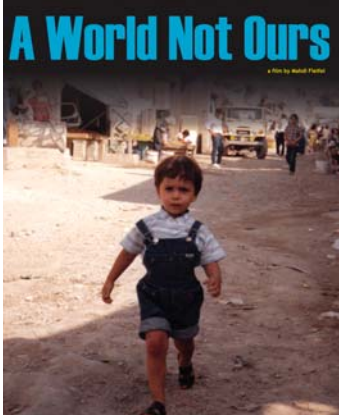


FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
24° 9°	24° 10°	24° 10°	25° 11°	24° 11°

**Smokey skies**  
Winds from the NNW is blowing the stubble burning smoke that is blanketing northern India away from Kathmandu for now, but the Valley’s own vehicular pollution is keeping Air Quality Index in the hazardous level in the mornings and evenings. However, the Tarai is getting some of the smoke and up-valley wind in the afternoon is bringing it up to the mountains as well. There is no westerly front in the offing, so expect a clear Tihar although the sunshine may be filtered somewhat by the haze.

OUR PICK

Palestinian-Danish director Mahdi Fleifel’s first-person documentary A World Not Ours takes viewers to the Ain el-Helweh refugee camp in southern Lebanon—established in 1948 as a temporary refuge for exiled Palestinians— where Fleifel grew up. Today, it is the largest Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon housing an estimated 120,000 people— serving as the hometown of generations of Palestinians. Based on personal recordings, family archives, and historical footage, Fleifel captures his relationship with a beloved friend in the camp, as well as the struggle, humour, and resilience of his community. Watch for free via Solidarity Cinema.



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



# Boating down the Babai in Bardia

Rafting and wildlife viewing adventure in western Nepal's pristine jungles

■ **Lisa Choegyal** in Bardia

“I just heard the tiger call three times. Let's stop here to see if they come out onto the river bank.”

All eight of us tense in silent anticipation. From the pug marks in the sand, the trackers have confirmed a male and female were together in the forest borders that stretch of the Babai River. Naturalist DB Chaudhary has heard the throaty cough of the mating signal, although none of the rest of us had noticed anything above the gurgle of the river.

Swathed against the morning glare of the sun in wide brimmed hats, cotton scarves, dark glasses and factor-50 sunscreen, we perch motionless on the hot rubber of the inflatable boats. It is only 9AM, but already the sandy heat is tangible. The boatmen hold the rafts against the shore as our binoculars scan for any sign of the world's largest cat, stripes that move in the sunlit shadows.

Our four-day river trip through the Babai Valley in the heart of Bardia National Park is taking us through the undisturbed domain of the wealth of wildlife found in the Tarai. Seldom visited, only a handful of companies attempt the complex logistics needed to outfit a multi-day river and camping trip that requires carrying in all equipment, supplies, medical and food, and packing out all rubbish and any sign that anyone has been there.

The cost of operating a Babai River trip is prohibitive, appealing to special interest wildlife tourists and mahseer anglers who are prepared to pay the price for the privilege of having the river to themselves for days on end.

These discerning international travellers contribute the significant national park entry, camping, fishing fees and liaison officer expenses, appreciating the protection given by the Nepal government and the local communities to such pristine habitat.

We see no other person or sign of civilisation on our journey from the Chepang bridge below Surkhet to the irrigation dam on the East-West Highway an hour west of Kohalpur. Only the glint of an occasional guard-post roof and a few silver aircraft droning overhead.

Our self-sufficient crew consists of 14 Nepali guides, naturalists, boatmen, camp, kitchen and park staff looking after our group of eight clients organised by Ussher Tours from the UK, personally escorted by Christopher Ussher, and operated by his former Gurkha colleagues at Insight Himalaya.

Piled high with equipment, our five rafts were paddled skilfully through the gentle meandering rapids or pushed over the smooth stones in the shallows. The two admin boats go ahead to make camp on a scenic beach, ensuring that by the time we arrive the tents are ready, kitchen, shower and toilets set up, and drinking water cleansed through the membrane filters of the innovative system brought from the US. Cheerful army efficiency make it look effortless.

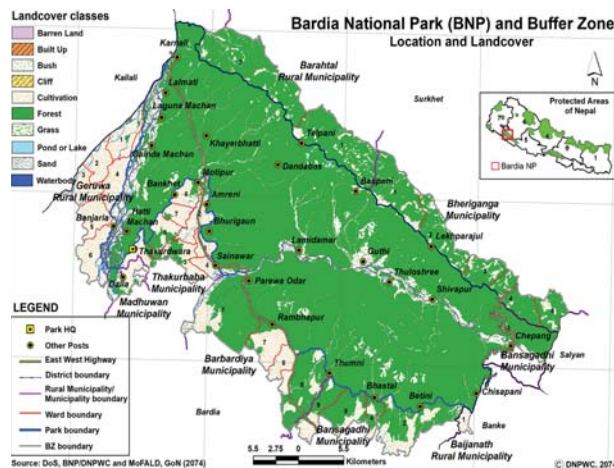
The rest of us dawdle through the day guided by DB and Christopher, stopping to view chital and langur on the river's edge, walking quietly through grassland and riverine forest in promising spots, teetering painfully across expanses of river stones to catch a mugger or gharial unawares, and examining tiger, elephant, rhino, deer and otter tracks on a sandy stretch.



LISA CHOEGYAL



CHRISSIE FRERE-COOK



**SIGHTSEEING:** The Babai River journey starts at Chepang on the road from Nepalgunj to Surkhet

No big cat viewing but plenty tiger tracks every day.

Participants saw elephants and many other wild animals during the trip.

Stately eagles, kites and falcons wheel overhead, flocks of teal and ruddy shell duck, storks, herons, egrets and lapwings live on the riverbank, and flashy kingfishers skim the surface. We pause to wallow in the cool clear water safely away from the deep turquoise pools favoured by crocodiles, and each day find a patch of delicious shade to eat lunch.

We are in constant state of expectancy – at any moment something might appear. As we munch our sandwiches and savour the view on the first afternoon, DB whistles an alert. His sharp ears have caught the tell-tale crack of a branch. Sure enough, flapping ears emerge through the high grass and soon the full majesty of a grown tusker is revealed on the opposite bank. The elephant drinks deeply from the river, keeping a watchful eye on us, then sprays his dusty crinkled skin from light to dark grey before lumbering upstream to cross the river.

Fully submerged at one point, he uses his trunk as a snorkel. Whilst he climbs purposefully out of the water just above us, we

make a tactical withdrawal back into the boats. We are braver the next day when a small herd of six elephants, mothers, aunts and a couple of babies, grace us by appearing silently out of the tall grass opposite. With a squeal of alarm the matriarch leads them up the river and back into the trees. There is plenty of water in the jungle at this time of year and we see a proliferation of new tracks daily, but the Babai's wild animal and bird population are not used to seeing visitors, making them shy and wary. Layers of Bardia's sal covered hills, riverine forest and thick grasslands recede in the moonlight as we gather around the driftwood fire, essential for deterring curious wildlife but handy for drying our towels. On previous visits, elephants and rhinos have caused hasty retreats to the boats in the small hours. Christopher regales us with stories from the private wildlife and angling groups he has been bringing to this wilderness over the decades.

In the 1980s his colleague Col Mike Allen, then British Embassy Defence Attaché in Kathmandu, and

John Edwards of Tiger Tops first explored the Babai's pools and runs for golden mahseer – catch and release fishing is strictly regulated by Park authorities.

Established in 1976 as Royal Bardia Wildlife Reserve, the current 968 sq km dimensions of Bardia National Park were fully gazetted in 1988 to protect 61 species of mammals, 513 species of birds, 42 herpetofauna and 120 fish. The Babai Valley was added in 1984 after 1,500 households were relocated outside the Park.

In 1997, the 327 sq km buffer zone was declared, jointly managed with local communities arranged into user groups. Conservation achievements include the translocation of 91 Greater One-Horned rhinos with the help of WWF Nepal from Chitwan National Park to the Babai, and bringing under control the poaching that proliferated during the years of insurgency.

We woke early on our final morning to a fine mist and soft jackal tracks in the sand, padding in the moonlight around our tents and the kitchen. Those tigers never did appear, much to DB's disappointment as he longed to show us the world's most magnificent cat. Nocturnal, solitary and minimising contact with humans, for most of us it is enough to know that they thrive in this undisturbed terrain.

I remember my first descent of the white water rapids of the Bheri River into Bardia with the skilled oarsmen of Himalayan River Exploration who pioneered commercial river trips in Nepal. We passed villagers who clearly had not seen foreigners, hurtled through churning cascades, ending at Tiger Tops Karnali Tented Camp on the Karnali River which in 1987

first opened West Nepal to foreign visitors and introduced tourism to Bardia. The riverside site is still a favourite with campers, though the concession to operate a permanent facility lapsed over ten years ago.

At Nepalganj airport we meet a Canadian group, extreme sport types who look as shell shocked with civilisation as we feel. They have been running the extreme white water of the mighty Karnali river, through the upper gorge, waterfalls and rapids in kayaks and rafts. “Super cool, one of the best trips of my life,” one bearded participant in lycra told me. They took off soon after entering Bardia as the Park's flat water held no interest for them. But like us, they were super happy with their unique Nepal adventure.

The tranquil green waters of the Babai, a tame float trip at best, too slow and low for most of the year without pushing over river rocks, holds little appeal for white-water adventure addicts. There are over 70 registered rafting agencies in Nepal these days, and a wide variety of rivers to be explored, packaged and matched to the range of high-value post-Covid travellers seeking remote nature. Likewise precious few of our thousands of registered trek and travel agents, are offering innovative new ecotrips to tempt untapped international and domestic markets that could open up new destinations and spread tourism benefits throughout the country.

A magnificent red sunset suffuses the cabin and bounces off the crystal peaks as we fly along the Himalaya to Kathmandu. 🇳🇵

 [nepalitimes.com](https://nepalitimes.com)

More photos online.





Repatriated sacred objects in National Museum, Chhauni.

# Gods in transit

Sacred objects stolen from shrines are being returned from museums in the West only to be stored away in museums in Nepal

■ Anita Bhetwal

The ancient stone sculpture of Uma Maheswar stolen from Dhulikhel 40 years ago was one of the first sacred objects to be returned to Nepal after it was traced to Berlin's Museum für Indische Kunst in 2000.

But the 900-year-old Shiva-Parvati that had been worshipped for nearly a millennium by devotees in Dhulikhel's Wa: Tole still languishes in the Patan Museum, waiting to be returned to the community.

After futile attempts to restore the divinity back to its original shrine, Dhulikhel Municipality made a replica three years ago and consecrated it to the temple. Ward chair of Dhulikhel-7 Romi Prasad Shrestha says the council does not want to risk bringing the original statue back because it might be stolen again.

"How can you just leave a precious thing like that by the side of the road?" he asked.

In 1976, a statue of Tara was stolen from Birbhadreswar Temple in Bhaktapur. Nearly 40 years later, it was tracked down to the Yale University Art Gallery and subsequently returned to Nepal in 2022. The statue weighing 83 kg had been worshipped daily for centuries by residents of the Golmadi neighbourhood before it was stolen.

The Tara was returned after years of investigation by the Department of Archaeology (DoA) and heritage conservation activists. The DoA says it is waiting for the local government in Bhaktapur to guarantee security before restoring it to the original temple. Ward 7's Ukesh Kawan says the process has begun for bringing the Tara home.

"After an idol is returned, it should be reinstated in the community but many do not want to risk it being stolen again," explains Sarita Subedi at the DoA.

Kathmandu Valley used to be known as a place with more gods than people and more temples than houses. Antiquities and sacred objects just lay by the roadside, worshipped by both Hindus and Buddhists. No one, not even the government, has an inventory of what was stolen over the past decades to be sold to galleries, museums and private collectors by art traffickers.

However, there is an exact figure of how many sacred objects have been returned: 143 so far. Of these, only 33 have been restored to their original shrines, the rest are either on exhibit or in storage at the National Museum Chhauni or Patan Museum. Some have been consigned to museums because their provenance is not known, or they have not been claimed by the communities from where they were stolen.

Jayram Shrestha of the National Museum says it is important to bring the deities back to where they belonged. But there is little interest at the local level to restore the



Dhulikhel's Wa: Tole Uma Maheswar was returned from Berlin's Museum für Indische Kunst in 2000. It languishes in the Patan Museum.



The Laxmi Narayan stele was stolen from Patko Courtyard in Patan in 1984 and was returned from Dallas Museum of Art. It is now back at the Patko shrine.

artifacts, he says, adding: "Their lack of confidence in ensuring security is setting a negative precedent."

According to the Local Government Operations Act 2017, municipal and provincial governments are responsible for protecting their archaeological sites and antiquities.

"The chances of the same idol being stolen again after it has been restored is very low because the figure will be so well documented internationally that no one will risk buying it," says Sanjay Adhikari, a heritage activist. "It is actually the ones that have not yet been stolen that are in greater danger." There are communities which have not only restored stolen deities to their original shrines, but also ensured that they are not stolen again. An 800-year-old androgynous Laxmi Narayan stele was stolen from Patko Courtyard in Patan in 1984 and was returned after being finally traced to the Dallas Museum of Art in the United States. It is now back at the Patko shrine, and there are alarms at the temple gate and five CCTV cameras to protect it.

Similarly, a 16th century Vajradhar statue that was stolen from Dolakha and traced to an art dealer in Hong Kong was reinstated within days after being repatriated. Activist Anil Chandra Shrestha says this was only possible because the local community and Guthi were proactive.

The Vajradhar was on display during the recent Indra Jatra festival and is kept in the storehouse of the Bhimeswar Temple in Dolakha. Says Shrestha: "The statue is secure because the police station is nearby and there are CCTV cameras. Locals are also more aware now."

Suresh Lakhe of Patan Museum says western collectors and museums regard the stone and bronze deities from Nepal as 'art', while for local communities these are sacred objects to be worshipped as part of a living culture. "It makes no sense to keep these figures as museum exhibits," he says.

The DoA's Saubhagya Pradhananga agrees: "Our ancestors created these objects to be worshipped, we should not use security as an excuse to confine them to museums. Otherwise, many other stolen deities will not be returned to Nepal. What is the point of transferring them from a museum in the West to a museum in Nepal?"



Stolen Nepali artifacts repatriated from the West now languish in Nepali museums because communities are reluctant to restore them for fear of the sacred objects being stolen again. Watch video online.





GOPEN RAI

# Must love dogs

This Kukur Tihar let's worship our dogs without scaring the living daylights out of them with firecrackers

■ Elisha Sthapit

Love for dogs is somewhat inherited. Humans have probably evolved to develop a special kind of gene that makes them predisposed to love dogs. And as canines evolved, dogs probably have bonding with humans in their DNA too.

That could be why I have always felt an instant connection with a dog. I am sure I was born with it. I also feel that instant connection with fellow dog lovers than with anyone else.

I was born in a family where dogs were tremendously loved and cared for. My mother's two biggest gifts to me are a) a kind heart, and b) love for all animals, especially dogs.

rescue a few, my four-legged girls. Many of these furry friends have since then found their way to my heart. Some are abandoned, others are community canines whom I feed snacks.

Each of them has a unique personality, each has a unique story to tell. Beyond their limitations of not having a home, they all enjoy and value their life in the streets and between struggling to protect their territory to finding food, they are also surrounded by humans who love them, feed them, give them a belly rub.

And it is heart-warming to see them walking around proudly with marigold garlands, foreheads red with vermillion on Kukur



SUMAN NEPALI

I grew up hearing her story of the time when I was 6 and was bitten near my eye by my uncle's dog. I needed to get stitches. Even today, she says she fails to understand why that never stopped me from loving dogs, and why I was never scared of them even after that traumatic event in my childhood.

As a child, my favourite memory is going out for walks with my mother when she fed biscuits to stray pups along the way. We knew the dogs all along the alleys outside the house. It is a practice I have inherited.

As soon as we walked out of the house, we would be trailed by neighbourhood dogs wagging their tails wildly in anticipation. They used to follow up right to the little corner store. And what grateful creatures God of Dogs created, the love and loyalty they show in exchange of one small treat or a little rub on their head.

So, when I say I love dogs, I am a bit biased. I have more affection for the strays on the road, the breed now recognised as a distinct species and which Nepalis fondly call bhusyaha kukur. My love for stray mutts and pups has led me to

Tihar (which this year falls on 12 November). This festival, which is unique to Nepal, is an equaliser because it forces us to embrace purebred pets at home equally with the strays outside.

The sad part, of course, is that the dogs we worship in the morning are scared out of their wits in the evening when the firecrackers start going off. Many strays and pets are so spooked they run away and are lost during Tihar. We have to be more mindful of this.

From living in the moment to loving selflessly to never complaining to never stopping to being happy, we humans have a lot to learn from dogs.

My hope is that we all continue this celebration all year round, that we find ways to rehome stray dogs, that we stop buying and start rescuing. For someone who has rescued dogs myself, I can tell you there is nothing as liberating as this act of humanity.

And the rewards that you receive in return is immeasurable. We can all take action by not buying another dog for our home, and who knows, the next rescue you make is the one who will rescue you. 🇳🇵

**SURYA NEPAL PRIVATE LIMITED**  
**JAZZMANDU 2023**  
 19th kathmandujazzfestival  
 MUSIC FOR UNITY, PEACE & COMPASSION

A big thank you to all the musicians, our partners, patrons, volunteers, staff and technical team for your energy for making Jazzmandu 2023 "The Biggest Jazz Party in the Himalayas" And above all an enormous thank you to our audience for your continuous support and enthusiasm!

SEE YOU IN JAZZMANDU 2024  
 FOR THE 20th CELEBRATION OF THE FESTIVAL!  
 OCTOBER 24-30  
**HAPPY TIHAR !**

EVENT PARTNERS:  
 swiss arts council, archelvetia, EUROPEAN UNION, Australian Embassy Nepal, Official Airline TURKISH AIRLINES, Times, BARAH-SINGHE, DARK FANTASY, MUSIC ROOM, GORE THE ZENTRUM KATHMANDU, B&T, BAS & TREBLE, MERCANTILE COMMUNICATIONS PVT LTD, Jazz, YAK & YETI, KATHMANDU, RYU, PERMETER, The Himalayan

**Standard OFFER**

**Speed ₹ Service**

**Guaranteed**  
 नत्र  
**पैसा फिर्ता**

**GUARANTEED MONEY BACK**  
 पक्का  
**MONEY BACK**

**Available on**

**200 Mbps** **250 Mbps** **300 Mbps**

**9801523050**

For More Information visit: [worldlink.com.np](http://worldlink.com.np)

Payment Partner **K khalti**

\*T&C Applied





# No cash this tihar? No problem.

■ Ramesh Kumar

Sabita Budhathoki of Bhaktapur went online to look for Tihar gifts. Dinesh Thakuri of Balaju did not set foot in a physical shop this festival season, doing all his shopping online.

As elsewhere in the world, post-Covid commerce in Nepal has moved online and physical stores are being replaced by the digital marketplace, and cash by e-wallets.

Fonepay, Nepal's largest mobile payment network, saw transactions worth Rs10 billion in a single day on October 17 during the Dasain shopping season, with payments by customers for goods and services

raking up Rs1.8 billion.

Nepal's largest online shopping platform Daraz, which was acquired by Chinese conglomerate Alibaba Group five years ago, alone sees transactions of Rs20 million every day.

"The rate of the growth of digital transactions has certainly been encouraging," says Guru Paudel of Nepal Rastra Bank's Payment Systems Department.

The expansion of mobile networks, the development of internet infrastructure, and a significant number of young Nepalis opting to conduct digital transactions has meant that e-commerce has spread rapidly across Nepal.

Expansion of e-payment services has led to a drastic drop in cash transactions in Nepal



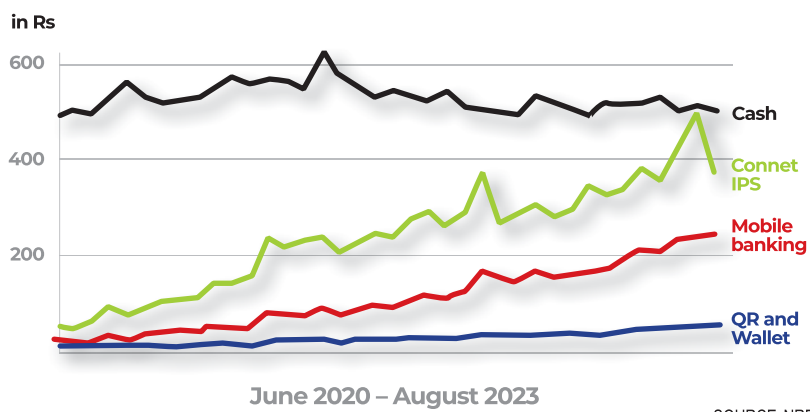




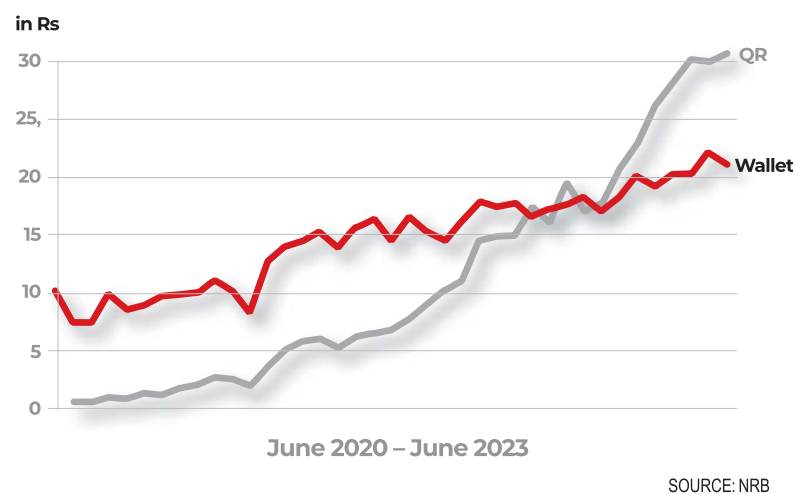
PHOTOS: NT ARCHIVE



### From cash to cashless (In billion)



### E-commerce on the rise (In billion)



In addition, the pandemic brought about changes to how people buy goods and services, giving Nepal's burgeoning online marketplace as well as cashless digital transaction services a boost.

There is now no need to carry cash to pay for groceries, clothes, appliances airline tickets or at petrol stations. Standing in long queues to pay phone or electricity bills is a thing of the past.

The amount of cash circulating within the country went from Rs450 billion at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, increasing as the infection rates peaked, and reached Rs625 billion by October 2021. After that it began a steep decline.

As of September 2023, Rs496 billion worth of banknotes are in circulation across Nepal, excluding cash in banks and financial institutions.

The first month of the lockdown saw transactions worth Rs5.64 billion conducted through

mobile banking. In the next four months, digital transactions increased threefold to Rs18.84 billion. At present an average of Rs8 billion worth of good and services are paid for online every day.

Prakash Kumar Shrestha of the Economic Research Department of Nepal Rastra Bank says changing business practices and consumption patterns have contributed to the decrease in the circulation of cash.

"Cash has become non-essential and cashless transactions the norm due to the increase in digital transaction services," adds Shrestha.

11 November (called Singles Day, or 11/11) is an annual unofficial holiday and online shopping fair in China. Over 24 hours, Chinese online marketplace Alibaba alone sees cashless purchases worth up to \$84 billion every year—twice the size of Nepal's economy.

Meanwhile, India surpassed China to become the country with the highest number of digital payments in 2022.

Daraz in Nepal is also preparing to mark 11/11 with attractive offers. Central bank data shows clear growth in digital transaction services like Connect IPS that links banks and is used to conduct larger business to services like eSewa and Khalti that are used for everyday transactions.

Transactions via Connect IPS increased from Rs2 billion daily to Rs12 billion from September 2020 to September 2023. Meanwhile, payments via mobile banking reached Rs242 billion in September 2023, more than a tenfold increase compared to Rs20.3 billion in September 2020. A total of 34.5 million transactions are conducted through mobile banking every month.

QR payments went from Rs650 million a month in September 2020 to Rs30 billion during

the same timeframe in 2023. Transactions on digital wallets like eSewa, Khalti, and IME Pay increased three fold from Rs7 billion a month in September 2020 to Rs21 billion this September.

"After India, Nepal is perhaps the next successful example of efficient mobile banking services in South Asia," says Paras Kunwar of Fonepay. "The development of digital banking services along with digital wallets looks very promising."

Prakash K Shrestha of the Economic Research Department of Nepal Rastra Bank, believes that digital business will make further strides. "The rate of evolution of digital transactions should go up, while cash transactions will become less and less common," he notes.

The only dark lining in the silver cloud is the general economic slowdown in the country with a lower trade volume. Unlike previous years,

pre-Dasain shopping season this year was tepid, with street front shops shuttered and bearing to-let signs.

Rameshore Khanal, former secretary of the Ministry of Finance, says that shut shops do not indicate a recession – it could be a change in the market towards online shopping. Shrestha of NRB notes that young people accustomed to conducting business on phones have stopped visiting physical shops.

"Places like New Road, which has long been the city's shopping hub, are frequented now by the above 55 demographic while the new generation shops online," he says. "This means more brick-and-mortar establishments will shut down in the near future."

Usha Dahal of Imadol began selling saris and kurtas on Facebook Marketplace during Tij this month, but her online shop took off so rapidly she got orders for home delivery of 50 saris a day.

"My shop is barely two months old and I don't even have an official name for it yet, but business is doing well," says Dahal, who buys through a wholesaler and delivers via a courier service. "Because there are not rental or utility bills, I can sell clothes cheaper, and my customers benefit. Besides, the shop is always open."

Guru Paudel of NRB's Payment Systems Department, attributes the leap in digital transactions services to changing post-Covid consumption patterns, the development of banking infrastructure, and the Central Bank's policy to promote digital transactions.

However, Paudel says, digital transactions can become even more widespread if the broadband internet is more affordable and reliable. Better digital security, promotion of digital payments can also control widespread corruption.

Fonepay's Kunwar agrees. Future spread of digital transactions will be determined by investments in infrastructure, as well as expanding awareness about the availability of such services. Nepal can only move towards being a digital economy if currency circulation falls below 10% of Nepal's GDP. Cash circulation currently is 14% of GDP.

Adds Kunwar: "Digital transaction services are still competing with cash in Nepal. The challenge lies in convincing the public to use our services, this is also an opportunity for service providers." 🇳🇵



# Jazzing up the ‘Mandu for 20 years

Nepal’s annual jazz festival ends on a delightful note ahead of its special 20th edition next year

■ Aisha MacDougall

Besides Dasain-Tihar-Chhath Nepal is known for a fourth annual autumn festival: Jazzmandu.

The event has grown since its inception in 2002 with new and prolific artists from across the globe flying into Kathmandu to showcase their talent and experience the unique atmosphere of the Valley. The melange of chosen venues reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of Nepal as well as the performers from around the world.

Surya Nepal Jazzmandu this year encapsulated and perpetuated the power of music and its ability to bring people together. From the pulsating groove of Plurism’s African rhythm and the mellow emotive voice of Lucile Chriqui to the bright tones of Samundra band’s rendition of Nepali folk music, this year’s jazz reflected the diversity of this music genre.

A free concert for the students of St Xavier’s School gave students exposure to the unique delights of jazz. There were concerts at Jazz Upstairs and the Dutch group Under The Surface performing at Electric Pagoda with experimental electronic sound. Multinational Forro performed at Jazz Upstairs while Swiss South African group Faku took on an intimate set at EDN in Sanepa.

The Jazz Bazaar at Gokarna Forest Resort gave guests a captivating musical showcase with the full Jazzmandu line-up. The



JAZZMANDU

historic Baber Mahal heard the rich tradition of Brazilian music. The penultimate evening in Patan was a culmination of the week with both foreign and Nepali artists performing a magical fusion of Nepali classical music and jazz.

The festival attracted a diverse audience from Kathmandu residents, tourists and expats. Said deputy EU ambassador Joëlle Hivonnet: “Jazzmandu is getting better every year. Although it does not attract world-renowned artists like Motreux or Marcia, it manages to bring upcoming artists and covers a variety of styles. I particularly enjoy bands that mix Nepali and western Instruments.”

The Lucile Chriqui quartet, a

formidable new force in French Jazz, ascribed their experience of Jazzmandu and Nepali culture as an experience like no other: “It feels like being on tour in one city.”

The band held a charity concert to raise funds for the burn victims at the Sushma Koirala Memorial Hospital. “It was amazing to perform for such an important cause. We realised the power of music as a tool for connection,” said Chriqui.

The band wants to take back to Paris the special energy and friendliness they experienced from the Nepali volunteers which inspired them to try and connect more with tourists visiting their own country, and the unique pace

of life in Kathmandu especially compared to Paris where “one hour feels like a minute”.

Chriqui also hopes to continue to experiment sonically, inspired by the timbre of Nepali traditional instruments. “Maybe I’ll also take home a singing bowl too,” she quips.

Next year Nepal’s pioneering music event will turn 20. Co-founder Navin Chettri says, “Initially, we were met with some reluctance and confusion regarding jazz but now there is no need to explain, Jazzmandu has put both jazz and Kathmandu on the map.”

When asked what’s in store for the special 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Chettri replied gleefully: “No spoilers.”

## Jazz at the Gate

In contrast to other Jazzmandu evenings, where the setlist was structured to showcase each act separately, ‘Jazz at Patan’ on 7 November celebrated the cultural exchange between jazz and Nepali classical sounds with musicians from around the world.

The meticulous fusion of repertoires and celebration of cultures abandoned the formulaic composition of ‘mainstream’ music structure, and transgressed genre to create a spiritual and meditative sound described by attendees as “grounding”, “unique” and “irreplicable”.

The lantern-lit, well-catered evening at Yala Maya Kendra facilitated an intimate experience for attendees who put stress and hunger aside allowing the technical prowess, professionalism, and self-expression of the bands to remain the focal point of the evening.

Artist Sisonke Xonti highlighted the privilege of performing in front of a live crowd again, a crowd that another artist Nick Aggs described as “the best at Jazzmandu”.

“In order to celebrate the unique sound of each artist, there needs to be a reciprocated level of intimacy and respect between artist and audience,” added Aggs.

Singer Lucile Chriqui was left feeling that the crowd was “truly listening and connected”. She added: “So much energy, so much love represented the very essence of Jazzmandu, which is to connect with people and demonstrate that music is a divine, universal language”.

Guests felt transcendental: one concertgoer was in disbelief at the ability of the artists to champion all instruments and voices and extolled the “inexplicable” connection she felt between everyone within the 100-year-old Rana-era courtyard.

The evening ended with a standing ovation, and the crowd ambled out of the venue still processing the magic of what they had witnessed. Jazz at Patan had a multicultural audience, and celebrated the oneness of humanity and was an event to be experienced at least once in a lifetime.

Uma Dhital

TATA MOTORS

Connecting Aspirations

INTRODUCING

NEXON EV MAX

NOW GET MAXIMUM FOR MINIMUM

NEPAL'S #1 EV

TRUSTED AND PROVEN

RANGE MAX

40.5 kWh BATTERY PACK

MULTI-MODE REGEN

GETS CHARGED IN 56 MINS\*

PERFORMANCE MAX

100 kW ELECTRIC MOTOR POWER

0-100 km/h IN < 9\* SECONDS

250 Nm INSTANT TORQUE

MULTI DRIVE MODES

SAFETY MAX

ADVANCED ESP WITH i-VBAC

ALL FOUR DISC BRAKES

ELECTRONIC PARKING BRAKE WITH AUTOHOLD

IP67 RATED BATTERY AND MOTOR

LUXURY MAX

ELECTRIC SUNROOF

JEWEL CONTROL KNOB

AIR PURIFIER WITH AQI DISPLAY

LEATHERETTE VENTILATED SEATS

go.ev

POWERED BY

ZIPTRON

Advanced Electric Drive Experience

SIPRADI TRADING PVT. LTD.,

An ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 45001:2018 Certified Company

Toll Free No.: 16600155777, 9801575777

For online booking



SIPRADI

01186

CDO Regd No 194/056/57 Lalitpur, Central Region Postal Regd. No 09/066/67