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KATHMANDU: Did you know that kalij (Iophura leucomelanos pheasant) were common in Kathmandu Valley 200 years ago? If you did not and you want to know more about the biodiversity in Nepal, then you must visit the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited where 'Celebrating 200 years of Biodiversity Research in Nepal' is on exhibition from March 23.

A look at research on Nepal's biodiversity

In the exhibition, 30 drawings of various plants and one of two birds using pencil and watercolour on woven paper are on display, drawn 200 years ago by un-named Indian artist. Various species of plants from ferns to herbs and shrubs to trees give a realistic view without missing a single minute detail. On the side of the paintings, detailed information about their medicinal purposes, name and more are

displayed.

Dr Francis Buchanan, a Scottish surgeon-naturalist, asked the Indian artist to make the drawings of various parts of herbs, shrubs and tree during a year in the Kathmandu Valley in 1802-1803. Buchanan was the first person to collect and record over a thousand plant species from Nepal — hundreds of which turned out to be new and previously un-described species.

The Linnean Society of London and Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh have produced this exhibition, which is the first public viewing of the drawings.

About the reason for

exhibition, Dr Mark F

Watson, Editor-in-chief of Flora of Nepal under Royal botanic Garden Edinburgh shares, "There are two things for the exhibition. Firstly to show and bring them back to Nepal for public viewing and to raise awareness about the biodiversity of Nepal where they are in threat of

extinction due to climate change, habitat destruction and invasion of alien species."

The exhibited plants are recorded in the book Flora of Nepal, which is the first of 10 volumes covering 600 species, published in 2011 including illustrations by Nepali botanical artist Neera Joshi Pradhan. For the remaining publication, botanical research comprising British, Nepali, Japanese and other international botanical experts are working on the project where Dr Watson shares, "The research on biodiversity in Nepal was started two centuries ago and looking at the need of conservation and their importance, we are going to complete it."

The exhibition is on till April 1.

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