

## (/) Wildlife parts, trophies stolen from Singha Durbar

Published On: © August 25, 2019 08:01 AM NPT By: Ashok Dahal (/news/author/1364) | [@ashokpillar](#)

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Photo: Republica

KATHMANDU, Aug 25: Everyone needs to go through strict security checkups to enter Singha Durbar, the government seat. But parts of wildlife trophies have been found to be stolen from the third floor of the iconic building of Singha Durbar, which remains almost abandoned after the 2015 earthquake.

A field inspection by the Delegated Management and Government Assurance Committee has revealed that at least three wildlife parts have been stolen from Belayati Baithak (British hall), which was used as a state

banquet hall, until 2012.

Tiger teeth have been snatched, deer horns have been cut off and a rhinoceros horn has been removed from the trophies which were used in the hall for over 100 years for decoration. "We found that teeth and claws of a tiger, a rhino horn and two horns of a deer trophy have been stolen. We were literally shocked to find this," chairperson of the committee, Ram Narayan Bidari told Republica.

According to Bidari, precious and antique decorative items have started to rot due to lack of preservation and direct contact with rainfall through the fissures in the building after the 7.8 magnitude earthquake. "Expensive furniture, carpet and other decorative items have rotten for the lack of preservation," he added. The historical hall was filled with pigeon droppings, dust and smell during the time of inspection from the parliamentary committee.

"Awakened by the pity condition" of the historical hall, the parliamentary committee formed a committee under Gopal Prakash Bhattarai, deputy-director general at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, to manage and suggest ways of preservation of the wildlife trophies.

The 12-member committee has submitted its report after shifting the trophies from the ancient Belayati Baithak hall to a sealed room in the Home Ministry for their safety. According to the report two tiger bodies, two leopard skins, one rhino skull, one deer skull and few other wildlife body parts have been degraded out of total 19 wildlife trophies in the hall. Interestingly, the committee report doesn't mention about the stolen wildlife parts.

Asked about the reason behind not mentioning the stolen parts, a committee member, who is an under-secretary at the Minister of Home Affairs, suggested to talk to the committee coordinator Gopal Prakash

Bhattarai, stating that he doesn't know about the details of the report. But Bhattarai is out of the country and is scheduled to return only next week.

The committee has also directed the forest and home ministries to preserve the trophies from Belayati Baithak, Narayanhiti Palace Museum and Hanumandhoka Museum after receiving the report.

### **What is Belayati Baithak ?**

Belayati Baithak (British Hall) also known as Durbar Baithak is a state banquet hall built by the then Rana Prime Minister Chandra SJB Rana in the 1900s.

The hall was built with imported decorative materials mostly from Britain. The hall sustained without any damages during the 1973 fire which completely damaged the east façade of Singha Durbar.

“The hall is a central banquet of Nepal which used to be utilized during the state and official visits of foreign delegates and on other special occasions,” said Bidari.

The hall was last used in January 2012 when the then Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai had hosted a lunch for visiting Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao. But the hall was closed after the 2015 earthquake which caused cracks to the building.

The National Reconstruction Authority has been currently retrofitting the building for its renovation in the original structure.

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