

# Green house 'miracle'? Hear it from owner

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**Dhunge Bazaar, Nepal:** For some, it's become known as the "miracle" green house. For others arriving to stare in wonderment and take selfies, it is simply "the viral house".

When a ferocious torrent of water, mud and debris swept away everything in its path in Nepal last week, it created a whirlpool of destruction around the Pyakurel family home in Dhunge Bazaar. A video spread far and wide on social media, showing the family helplessly looking down from their third-floor balcony at the angry deluge slamming against their home, the waves trying to lap them up.

But the house stood firm.

Chhatra Bahadur Pyakurel, 67, said he had just dropped his grandson off at the school bus and returned home when the floods — caused by a massive glacier collapse in the Himalayan region between Nepal and Tibet — reached their home.

For over an hour, all the family could do was watch the carnage around them — first from the balcony, and then



**The green house in Nepal's Dhunge Bazaar, which survived the flash floods, on Tuesday. (Reuters)**

after climbing to the roof, as the wall of water and debris kept growing taller and wilder.

"At first we did not know what would happen or whether we would survive," Pyakurel said. "But after some time, we realised there was nothing more we could do. Our lives were in the hands of the almighty God, whether he would save us or let us drown."

"The only thought that kept troubling me was about my grandson, who had already left for school," he added. "I kept thinking: 'If we all die,

who will look after him?'"

The house went viral as photographs of it still standing, alone amid a wasteland of mud and debris, circulated online. Almost a week after the devastation, as the road in front of the house was partially reopened and traffic returned slowly to Dhunge Bazaar, visitors climbed up the ridge to get a view.

The house has got its own pinpoint on Google Maps as a "flood-proof" attraction.

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# Nepal's 'miracle' house that withstood flood

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The river had calmed on Tuesday, but its water remained muddy. Little beyond the pillars of the first two storeys of the house were left. On the third-storey balcony, the washing machine remained, along with a pile of laundry. The roof — with its water tanks, a solar water heater, a small family temple and many tall plants — looked neatly intact.

The house has become one of the rare stories of survival amid a grim picture of devastation, its full extent still growing by the day. The death toll in Nepal rose above 1,100 on Wednesday, with almost 4,800 more people still missing, and hundreds more remain unaccounted for in Tibet.

Rescue missions — complicated by continuous rains and entire towns covered in the kind of soft mud that makes helicopter landings difficult — have managed to rescue over 11,000 people. Thousands of survivors are in temporary shelters.

In the surrounding Nuwakot district alone, over 1,200 homes have been fully damaged and more than 1,000 oth-

ers partially damaged.

Connectivity remains a major issue in a country with difficult terrain, dozens of bridges wiped out and entire stretches of road, including the one just beyond Dhunge Bazaar, completely destroyed.

Bishu Mani Rimal, 45, who was among the crowd staring at the surviving house, lives about 5km downstream, where the torrent of water had slowed slightly.

"Who would believe people in that situation would survive?" he said. "I thought they didn't even have a 1 per cent chance."

Rimal surveyed the destruction all around. He said that power turbines on the other side of the river were gone. So, too, was an entire bazaar.

Four homes owned by the same extended family had also vanished.

"One house was so new, they hadn't even moved in," he said.

Pyakurel, the family patriarch, said the ground floor of the green house was built in 1995, when he had a grocery store. As his business expanded, including to selling liquor

wholesale, the family kept adding floors.

He said that, after an hour of being trapped on the roof, neighbours came to help them out when water levels receded. The rescuers used metal pipes to create a makeshift ladder to lead them to safety, he said.

He said the house may have remained standing because its pillars were anchored by drilling deep into the rock, but he also said that it was spared by God. Theories about the house have cropped up, with some saying that a ridge jutting out into the path of the torrent had helped shield it.

Pyakurel said they were still assessing the full damage, as he had temporarily shifted to Kathmandu. But he feared that little remained on the first two floors.

"Now, everything is gone," he said. "Even our family's most important documents, including citizenship certificates, passports and land registration certificates, were destroyed."

But he was grateful that his grandson was safe, as the school had been on higher ground. They were all reunited the day after the flood.

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