Nepal Airlift begins

Never before has this country had to carry out a mass evacuation on this scale. There are about 136,000 Nepalis who need to come home from oversees because they have been stranded, laid off, or their short-term visas have expired.

Of these, 24,144 have registered for urgent repatriation with Nepali embassies abroad. On Wednesday, the government finally released a timetable for repatriation flights, and fixed ticket prices (go online for details). One way fare to Kathmandu from most Gulf cities is $500, while Bangkok is $890.

The UAE has the highest number of Nepalis who have registered for repatriation followed by Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Malaysia (see chart). In addition, there are also Nepalis on family visits to the US, Canada, UK, Japan, Australia, as well as students and expat Nepalis in Southeast Asia, who want to come home. Besides those returning, there are also those who were in Nepal on their annual leave from work, and could not fly out because of the lockdown. The Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation’s timetable lists 67 flights till 23 June to be operated by Nepal Airlines, Himalaya Airlines and specified international carriers from Dhaka, Male, Dubai, Melbourne, Bangkok, Bahrain, Nara, Kuwait, Nicoa, Sydney, Dublin, Senul, Oman, Osaka. There are seven flights bringing back Nepalis stranded in Kampala, Lagos and Juba.

The government has allowed more than 35 international charter flights to repatriate more than 12,000 tourists and expats trapped in Nepal since flights were stopped on 22 March. But some Nepali permanent residents and those on work visas had been allowed on embassy-sponsored flights to Australia, Japan, Korea, and the UAE. A Nepali couple who had been in Kuwait since seven years came home for holidays on 24 February, but have been trapped in Kathmandu since. They had been hoping to be put on the flight going back, but the government is only allowing repatriation flights for foreigners stranded in Nepal.

Passengers who arrive will be swab tested at the airport and taken to holding centres in Kathmandu Valley set aside for each of the seven provinces. They will wait there for two days for results, and if negative will be transported to their home provinces where they will have to quarantine or self-isolate for two weeks. If positive, they will be taken to isolation wards in Kathmandu.

nepalitimes.com
HOMECOMING

I

f there is one proof of the fickleness of the Nepali state in the past 25 years, it is that governments have found a whole generation of citizens to seek jobs abroad. To be sure, migration has been a part of Nepal ever since the time that members of the East India Company’s army even while Nepal was battling the British in Kumaon, Nepalis flocked to Gorakhpur when they heard the indentured labourers were needed for coffee and sugar plantations in Ceylon and the West Indies. In the last century, led by subsistence farmers left sick in Sikka, Assam and Bhoten by the thousands.

Outmigration always served as a safety valve—a much easier option than investing serious investment so few jobs were created at home. The 1995-96 language crisis and the ethnic violence that followed it were both small episodes in an era that saw a never-ending exodus of young people leaving not just for employment, but also security. Nepal became the country with the highest proportion of people leaving home in search of remittances—much higher than labour-exporting countries like Philippines, Bangladesh and even Europe.

As a remittance-based economy Nepal is threatened by geopolitical tension, the price of oil, xenophobia, and trends in the global economy. After the two Iraq wars, during the Saudi-UAE blockade of Qatar and from recent financial sanctions imposed between Iran and the US, the future of migration looks shaky. These uncertainties have added to the vulnerability of Nepalis already facing inflation, inequality and structural discrimination at home. But even during the process of leaving they are exerted by ruthless middlemen, airport officials, recruitment agencies and host country governments.

All these risks have converged during the coronavirus crisis. There is no way Nepal can bring back all 6 million of its citizens working abroad, the government has been overwhelmed by even the 330,000 who have returned or want to do so.

Repatriation is difficult because there is a huge discrepancy between those who want to return home and those who are not ready to return on flights available. The government has made guidelines on who gets to go first, it has developed an arrival protocol. Those who can pull strings have got on the first flights. The Nepal Airline Airbus that came back on Tuesday night from Cambodia with 13 passengers was mainly carrying government officials and families stranded in Australia.

The 1,500 Nepali undocumented workers in Kuwait and the 17,000 in UAE who were supposed to be on the priority list were following all this on social media and were outraged, the first Kuwaiti flights finally arrived on Thursday. As such a hugeuptakings lastparks were to be expected. Putting a scale to vulnerability will not be easy. As one government wake up to the criticism and on

Wednesday brought out a timetable of flights, fixed the price of tickets from Dubai, and issued guidelines on arrival criteria? But we can at least be hopeful of powerful still trying to jump the queue.

A major flaw in the process is that while the workers are required to have the cost of flights as their own. As our report shows, many have been stranded for over two months in camps, and exhausted all their savings on room and food, there is no guarantee they can afford the inflated fares on chartered flights.

As one detected Nepali worker in Dubai told our reporter over the phone after hearing of the Sharjah flight: “The only consolation, I can take from this is that at least some Nepalis got to go home.”

Pregnant women in UAE were assured by the embassy they were on the priority list, but now have been told they have to wait some time. As one two U.S. security companies took the first flights out.

The other government rule required everyone to have a COVID-19 negative medical certificate before boarding. None of those who have arrived so far did those tests before boarding. Where are the stranded workers going to go now to get tested?

Nepali embassies abroad are even-ruled by uncoordinated decisions by ministers and in Kathmandu. The COVID-19 repatriation exposes all the chronic weaknesses in governance and magnifies them: ad hocism, lack of coordination and communication, neglect of the weakest and poorest.

The least the government can do now is communicate transparently about the flight schedules, who will be on them, how to get tickets at the designated price, support for those who cannot afford it, and not any more hanky panky when passenger manifests. Returnees have been through a lot – they should not be given a hard time and grief when they arrive.

The crisis also provides an opportunity for the government to look at ways to provide employment at home for as many returnees as possible, but that is far from first things.

PEACEFUL PROTESTS

It would be a mistake to raise awareness to acquire more relatable PRC-like to test Nepali migrant workers returning (peacefully physically distanced protests’ times.com) that, but the inconvenient government can’t listen. Why the use of batons and water cannons to silence the voices of the youth? Some of them are directly involved in distributing relief in the flood-ravaged areas of the country where the government has set up ineffective quarantine centers.

Vidhuram Sherpa

Youth are now self-organising and logically coming forth to fight against injustice, inequity, and inequality. I pray that each protest may be peaceful and non-violent.

Maiwong Tenzin

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

In its second edition 10 years ago the week issue #506, community leader Prabhakar Adhikari pointed out: “The beautiful way to get rid of ‘ticket understanding of the constitutional process’. Even a decent one, Singh’s anarchist worst thing ever.” Except: “They are suffering from identity crisis and are drifting towards social fascism. If this trend persists, we won’t be moving towards the consensus of the present and as an inverted opposition the revolution will drift towards a non-revolutionary fascist dictatorship.”

The extreme ideological view and the way the Maoist was a mistake and it was unsuccessful. But even after they abandoned that armed struggle, they haven’t been able to shake their extremist tendencies and authoritarian behavior.

As a result of the interminable war and the Maoist was a mistake and it was unsuccessful. But even after they abandoned that armed struggle, they haven’t been able to shake their extremist tendencies and authoritarian behavior.

ONLINE PACKAGES

WHAT’S TRENDS

Peacefully physically distanced protests

People in Kathmandu came together this week demanding better government response to the COVID-19 crisis. The police use of batons, water cannon and arrest depict in the photo shows the struggle to share social media and provided outside outrage.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Most commented

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepal Times @NepalTimes

On the eve of WorldEnvironmentDay on 5 June, the government declared its new slogan this year’s theme to be: “Act now to secure our future. Nepal is already experiencing the impact of climate change.”

Thanks to @NepalTimes for highlighting the efforts of the good hardworking people and the world they are doing.

Jessy Courte

HELPING HANDS

Youth, private sector and small local bodies are always the first to step up and do their bit from the goodness of heart (Lockdown brings out the best in Nepal: Ashok Sinha, Sept 10th) They find solutions to daunting problems and stand down any human crisis without fear, without fear and on time. Thanks Nepal! Those for highlighting the efforts of the good hardworking people and the world they are doing.

Jessy Courte

PEACEFUL PROTESTS

It would be a mistake to raise awareness to acquire more relatable PRC-like to test Nepali migrant workers returning (peacefully physically distanced protests’ times.com) that, but the inconvenient government can’t listen. Why the use of batons and water cannons to silence the voices of the youth? Some of them are directly involved in distributing relief in the flood-ravaged areas of the country where the government has set up ineffective quarantine centers.

Vidhuram Sherpa

Youth are now self-organising and logically coming forth to fight against injustice, inequity, and inequality. I pray that each protest may be peaceful and non-violent.

Maiwong Tenzin

GREN NEPAL TIMES

A source of inspiration in these troubled times (Nepal’s post-pandemic green revival, Kirti Gaut, #1921) A call not to lose hope in environmental conservation.

Bijaya Dutta Koirala

Positive environmental news, a signpost as possible ways forward and good news from other quarters would make a huge difference compared to the current outlook in the country.

Ian Wall

The solar farm resides at a place where our solar panel unit used to be some 5 years ago (Nepal’s biggest solar power plant, nepaltimes.com): It has added an extra dimension in Nepal’s power industry that would make the country competitive.

Nadeen Badhan

Bicycles could be the best alternative to reduce the traffic (Re-Cycling Kathmandu, Bhurun Kathalari, September 1st) and it is not just to reduce pollution but also every small step we do.

Nadeen Badhan

Re-cycling Kathmandu

by Bhurun Kathalari

Bicycles are people to people, physical distance worries taking minimum space on the streets. Physical exercise and energy saving, the immediate green space saving. The world is looking at Nepal as a showcase of just a post-COVID green recovery, and it is time for Kathmandu to ride keep as well.

Visit nepaltimes.com for the latest news.

Most popular on Twitter

Most visited online page

Nepal Times @NepalTimes

On the eve of World Environment Day on 5 June, the government declared its new slogan this year’s theme to be: “Act now to secure our future. Nepal is already experiencing the impact of climate change.”

Thanks to @NepalTimes for highlighting the efforts of the good hardworking people and the world they are doing.

Jessy Courte

HELPING HANDS

Youth, private sector and small local bodies are always the first to step up and do their bit from the goodness of heart (Lockdown brings out the best in Nepal: Ashok Sinha, Sept 10th) They find solutions to daunting problems and stand down any human crisis without fear, without fear and on time. Thanks Nepal! Those for highlighting the efforts of the good hardworking people and the world they are doing.

Jessy Courte

PEACEFUL PROTESTS

It would be a mistake to raise awareness to acquire more relatable PRC-like to test Nepali migrant workers returning (peacefully physically distanced protests’ times.com) that, but the inconvenient government can’t listen. Why the use of batons and water cannons to silence the voices of the youth? Some of them are directly involved in distributing relief in the flood-ravaged areas of the country where the government has set up ineffective quarantine centers.

Vidhuram Sherpa

Youth are now self-organising and logically coming forth to fight against injustice, inequity, and inequality. I pray that each protest may be peaceful and non-violent.

Maiwong Tenzin

GREN NEPAL TIMES

A source of inspiration in these troubled times (Nepal’s post-pandemic green revival, Kirti Gaut, #1921) A call not to lose hope in environmental conservation.

Bijaya Dutta Koirala

Positive environmental news, a signpost as possible ways forward and good news from other quarters would make a huge difference compared to the current outlook in the country.

Ian Wall

The solar farm resides at a place where our solar panel unit used to be some 5 years ago (Nepal’s biggest solar power plant, nepaltimes.com): It has added an extra dimension in Nepal’s power industry that would make the country competitive.

Nadeen Badhan

Bicycles could be the best alternative to reduce the traffic (Re-Cycling Kathmandu, Bhurun Kathalari, September 1st) and it is not just to reduce pollution but also every small step we do.

Nadeen Badhan

Re-cycling Kathmandu

by Bhurun Kathalari

Bicycles are people to people, physical distance worries taking minimum space on the streets. Physical exercise and energy saving, the immediate green space saving. The world is looking at Nepal as a showcase of just a post-COVID green recovery, and it is time for Kathmandu to ride keep as well.

Visit nepaltimes.com for the latest news.

Most popular on Twitter

Most visited online page
The dangers of the dengue virus

Haphazard urbanisation in Nepal has created ideal conditions for the mosquito that carries the disease

The year 2019 saw Nepal’s worst ever outbreak of dengue, with 15,000 people infected, many times the previous high. Dengue was particularly bad in the Kathmandu Valley. At least six people died.

In a medical journal, The Lancet has warned that Kathmandu residents see dengue as an "ideal breeding ground" for the mosquito that carries dengue — the notorious Aedes aegypti. Already in 2020, four cases have been reported in Kathmandu, and four in Lalitpur.

Dengue spiked in 2019 with outbreaks around the developing world. In recent years, Delhi, Mathura, MnK City, Senegal and Singapore have faced bad outbreaks. A dengue outbreak in Delhi in 2015 inundated hospitals and clinics across the city.

Dengue likes warm humid conditions. Before corona, dengue was the world’s fastest growing dangerous virus, increasing fourfold in just over a decade. Two of every five people around the world, nearly 3 billion people, live in dengue risk areas where it is a leading cause of illness. Each year approximately 100 million people contract the disease, and over 20,000 die.

Like malaria, dengue is actually several different diseases that we give a single name. There are four dengue serotypes: Dengue 1, 2, 3, and 4. A person can catch each one, and get sick as many as four times.

A first infection with any type brings only mild flu symptoms, which can cause a "severe dengue" with plasma leakage, bleeding, and shock. This can kill. No treatment exists for dengue, but generally symptoms can be managed.

Dengue’s main mosquito host, Aedes aegypti, is no ordinary mosquito. It’s a species known for death and devirulence, it has few rivals. Not many mosquitoes have so successfully defined human efforts at control, including in recent decades.

Long before dengue, Aedes aegypti carried a far deadlier disease: yellow fever. During the 16th and 17th century, slave ships brought yellow fever carrying A. aegypti from Africa to the Americas, devastating indigenous populations and weakening the region’s balance of power.

In the early 20th century, the A. aegypti — yellow fever combination almost blocked the continent’s trans-Atlantic trade.

Most wildlife avoids humans. Not Aedes aegypti. It loves us, particularly the ecological disorder we often create. The more humans, the more disturbed ecosystems, the more A. aegypti. Cities, especially diseased cities, create ideal habitats: lots of standing water for breeding and lots of humans for feeding.

Dengue’s other mosquito carrier is A. albopictus. The Lancet points to dengue’s major causes: climate change, reckless and haphazard urbanisation, brick trade and transit from dengue-infested areas, and poor health infrastructures. As Kathmandu grows and gets more connected to other parts of Asia, dengue spreads.

Climate change has been overrated as a cause. Warmer temperatures can extend the range of Aedes but other causes deserve more attention. Last summer’s explosion of dengue in Kathmandu Valley was blamed on climate change, but it was actually a perfect storm of crowded and squalid living conditions, poor drainage, greater mobility of people, and a particularly wet monsoon.

The real problem is diseased urbanisation. The A. aegypti carrier thrives in small collections of clean water in flower pots, old car and truck tires, uncovered water containers, and even puddles. It bites people early morning and at dusk.

Nepal, like much of the developing world, has witnessed urban and disorderly urban growth in recent years, much in the lowlands along highways. ‘Nepal’s Tarzi,’ Mokesh Fokhrel recently wrote in this newspaper, ‘is turning into one endless elongated metropolis.’

Kathmandu’s fixed growth fourfold between 1990 and 2010, and is one of the fastest growing cities in one of the world’s fastest urbanising regions.

Cities like Kathmandu are perfect breeding grounds for the Aedes mosquitoes, says Jeremy Forster of the Wellcome Trust in an interview with this paper. ‘Kathmandu’s climate is changing, the city is growing exponentially in a haphazard way and the mosquito loves highly dense populationsof people.’

The Lancet highlights what might happen in a dengue explosion in Kathmandu. ‘A tug-of-war might occur between the worried well and the truly sick,’ it says. ‘Hospitals might be overwhelmed and many newly infected patients with other diseases could be turned away.’

Doctors inexperienced with the disease are a particular worry. They could misinterpret its symptoms and cause unnecessary deaths by over-treating with unsedated antibiotics, transfusions, and excessive intravenous fluids.
Anil Chitrakar is attributed with defining masculinity by repeating the same process again and again, but expecting a different result. By this logic, we, human beings are stuck running in circles. But excelling even more on Einstein's madness scale would be us Nepalis.

½ FULL
Anil Chitrakar

President Bidya Devi Bhandari recently eroded a two-and-half hour long speech about the government’s plans and policies. In parliamentary systems, this is just a formality. But Finance Minister Yubashree Khatiwada proved she could deliver his budget speech from the same podium that completely contradicted what she had laid out a few days previously.

As usual, the budget speech is a cut-and-paste job that repeated ad nauseum a wish list that has been repeated ad nauseum before. Wonder if the same person has been writing the speeches for people with minor edits to suit the political masters of the day.

The budget cannot just be a menu followed by ad-hoc allocations and some vague source of taxation. It needs to give the people a clear direction — especially at a time when it is clearly headed to the edge of the coronavirus precipice.

Traditional wisdom says that if you want to make God laugh, tell him/Her that you have a Plan. Nepal always seems to have a plan for every situation. The only problem is that with these plans is that they never get implemented.

Some donor-funded projects do get some work done, but the agencies doling out the money are accountable to tax payers back home. But even here, Nepal has to watch from the sidelines because the way contracts are awarded and the method with which the government engages with these donor partners and donors procure services, is opaque and restricted.

One of the puzzles is the ‘capacity building’. It has always been the biggest trouble. Doing business in Nepal is on the rise, and unless you have an inside track nothing moves. No wonder the poor always end up paying more for almost everything.

So, chocolate is going to be cheaper and electric vehicles are going to be more expensive. That is what the average person on the street has concluded about the budget. Nepal will generate 1.3GW more this year, doubling its generation capacity. But the Finance Minister does not want to create a market for surplus power by encouraging electric vehicles. Everyone gets it.

A senior government official says government drivers, administrators, and accountants will never allow us to replace diesel and petrol vehicles because they still have not figured out how to drive from electric vehicles. Once this problem is solved, you can be sure electric vehicles will become a normal part of our life.

So we will have plenty of cheap chocolate, a lush new carpet at the presidential palace, and cabinet ministers who look really fit because they are getting a new gym. Now that foreign hospitals and treatment are not an option due to the lockdown, it makes perfect sense. Someone has also figured out that Nepal’s doctors will pay for almost anything in the wish list, but a carpet and gym maybe a bit of a push. We know how to work these systems.

Many thinkers and writers have taught us that the problem with the present application of capitalism is that all the profit goes into private pockets or bank accounts, but all the costs and risks are ultimately socialised. No one can tell us where and how our politicians became so good at condemning capitalism, but they do not quite seem to get the idea for the need to replace imported fossil fuels, which are paid for by precious foreign currency earned by our young migrant workers.

They do not seem to get the link between the cost of imported vehicles, imported fossil fuel, declining jobs in foreign lands, numerous Indian blockades and air pollution that makes all of us vulnerable to COVID-19 which seems to prefer to attack the respiratory system. Then there is climate change, but that was dealt with on World Environment Day. The budget should be the platform that establishes these linkages.

COVID-19 has demonstrated that our vulnerability depends on our health and also our wealth. Many rich people do not work in the essentials services sector, have health insurance and access to the best services. The poor, who should be more concerned, demand an end to the lockdown and call the need to go back to the old normal that was, all said and done, working in their favour. Change is easy to demand but very difficult to implement.

The poor, who have neither health nor wealth, get sick, die and leave their families poorer than before. Breaking this vicious cycle is what the budget needed to address. It is this systemic poverty that keeps many politicians in power.

The poor become the vote bank, and the poverty card is played every four to five years to get into positions of power. The budget making process forgets who and how they get into power in the first place.

Anil Chitrakar is President of Sindicatu and this is his fortnightly column for Times Nepal Times.
Despite the COVID-19 lockdown, conservationists in eastern Nepal are busy tracking ten wild red pandas they had fitted for the first time with GPS-satellite collars in December to monitor their behaviour and habitat.

The 10 red pandas were tranquilised and fitted with collars in the Panchthar-Same-Tapiyang (PST) Corridor, a forested area on the border between Nepal and India near the Karnali, the world’s third highest mountain.

The data shows the movement of red pandas between the Nepal and India, and also allows researchers to track their habits. This will help them protect the shy animal, which is listed as an endangered mammal on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species.

“This is a great milestone in red panda conservation,” says Man Bahadur Khadka, Director General of Nepal’s Department of Forests and Soil Conservation (DOFSC).

“We are committed to the protection and conservation of this charismatic species whose survival is threatened by human factors.”

This satellite tracking provides data of the panda’s positions every two hours, and will help conservationists better understand how red pandas interact in a habitat that is dominated by human settlements. Their movement, interaction with each other and response to disturbances will be analysed, says lead investigator Damber Bista, a PhD student at the University of Queensland.

This GPS-Satellite tracking project is led by the DOFSC with technical support from the Department of National Parks and Red Panda Network. The tracking and collaring of the six female and four male red pandas took three months from September to December 2019 in Samdrup Rural Municipality of Sama district.

The research team consisted of officials from the government, Red Panda Network, University of Queensland, local Forest Guardians, and the Divisional Forest Office in Samdrup and Janak Weeraman at Rotterdam Zoo.

Red panda sightings are regarded as an omen by local people, and their cuddly appearance make them a popular species. Yet their numbers have declined due to poaching and habitat destruction. Despite not having any medicinal, cultural, or religious value of red panda, its illegal palm trade in Nepal is on the rise due to the misconception among people.

Known as Ailurus fulgens and pandas found in the local dialect in India, the red panda is from a distinct taxonomical group and is not related to the giant panda, which belongs to the bear family.

“Red pandas are the only extant member of their taxonomic family,” explains Angela Giolita of the Global Species Management Plan, and chair of the Red Panda Network board, “which means that if they were to become extinct that would be, at least taxonomically, like losing the whole cat family, from lions to domestic cats.”

The animal lives on the canopy of broadleaf and mixed temperate forests from western Nepal right up to Sichuan, and is an excellent tree-climber. There are now less than 10,000 wild red pandas worldwide, and 400 in zoos around the world. There are only 1,300 left in 24 of Nepal’s 77 districts.

Despite the stiff penalties for poaching, the animals are poached for their hides even though there do not seem to be a trans-boundary market for the fur. While red panda inside Nepal’s national parks are protected, now communities in Nepal’s eastern districts of Panchthar, Samdrup, and Tapiyang which have one-fourth of the total red panda population in the country have set up Forest Guardians to protect and monitor the red panda.

The GPS-satellite collar study is part of the Red Panda Network’s long-term monitoring initiative and is already providing valuable baseline data on the animal’s ecology, distribution, and behaviour. The study is supported by Rotterdam Zoo which has been involved in red panda research and conservation since 1998.

“Data from all ten of the collared animals are being tracked, they seem to be moving about well,” says Somen Tushi Lama of the Red Panda Network. “If we lose data because of camera or cloud obstruction we have Forest Guardians on the ground who have VHF antennas and custom tramps to go look for them.”

The network set up the Forest Guardians in villages in the red panda range on the Nepal side of the habitat to provide intelligence about possible poachers and to monitor the animals. Locals in India have not reported any increase in poaching activity during the lockdown, as has been seen in some community forests and national parks in Nepal.

Sana Ang Pewar Shrestha, Country Director for Nepal of the Red Pandas Network: “This is a proud moment for us to have the opportunity to fulfill one of the objectives of Nepal’s Red Pandas Conservation Action Plan.”

This is the first time GPS-satellite collars are being used to study red pandas in the wild. During the 1980s, the pinnacer red panda biologist from Nepal, the late Pradip Yonzon, had used terrestrial radio collars to study red pandas in Langtang National Park, central Nepal. A female red panda among the ten animals collared was named Pradip Devi in honour of the conservationist who was killed when his bicycle was hit by a truck in Kathmandu in 2011. The other red pandas were named Parsa, Dolina, Chintau, Mehar, Sushma, Sonam, Bir, and Nimsame by local people including Forest Guardians, and the names represent culture, landscape, language, and ethnicity of the region.

The GPS collars were first tested with two captive red pandas at Rotterdam Zoo to evaluate their effectiveness before being fitted on the ten animals in Nepal.

Janak Weeraman at the Rotterdam Zoo, who was involved in collecting the animals in India, says: “It is very important that conservationists on the ground in Nepal and in Rotterdam work together to protect the red panda and their habitat.”

Part of this cooperation is the GPS collar research project. The results will give us insight into the ecology of the species and their natural habitat.  
Virtual Events

Music contest
Alliance Française de Kathmandu is organizing a music contest to celebrate World Music Day. Send in a solo or band performance video of an original composition or a cover song. Get additional details and register for free on Facebook until 17 June.

ICROM webinar
Participate in the webinar “Exceeding Heritage During a Pandemic” from the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property. The webinar will discuss digital possibilities and offer practical connections and tools for people to access heritage across the world. Details on the ICROM Facebook page 12 June, 5.45 am onwards.

POetry Festival
Shahin Theatre will begin publishing poems from its annual World Chilli Poetry Festival on YouTube from the upcoming week.

Online Archives
Free Netflix documentaries
Netflix has released some of its documentaries for free on YouTube for educational purposes in light of the global coronavirus pandemic. Watch the award-winning documentary Our Planet from Sir David Attenborough to start.

Quarantine Dining

Keventers
I-sandwich for a cold shake on long, summer afternoons! Stick with the classics, or take a risk and order the kibbeh luma shake. Choose from Keventers’ menu on Foodhub.
Delivery: 12pm-6.30pm, 9864326236

Bhumi
Experience authentic Nepali flavoured food from the Nepal Bihur Sanchar and Chhena and Chicken Sambar. Check the menu at Chhena Maha and order.
Delivery: 11am-6pm (01) 5527285

Photo9
Enjoy a wide variety of mouth-watering Vietnamese food including cold noodles, deep fried spring rolls, Vietnamese salad and curries, along with Vietnamese national staple, the delicious Pho. Check out the menu on Foodhub.
Delivery: 11am-6pm, 1811901414, 9863567510

Zen Bistro
Taste a taste of Thai Bistro’s menu with Pad Thai and a selection of Thai food, from delicious Pad Thai to a range of curries, fried rice, and soups.
Delivery: 12pm, 01 47646038

Ecológico with Miss Moti

Kripa Joshi
Gifting staff, when we don’t like the weather, can be a challenge. This year, let us provide you with unique gifts. The perfect present for a person who wants to spread love, a good option is to furry the heart. There are different items, from candles, to fruits and dairy, and gift boxes to choose from. They also have wooden items with beautiful designs, handmade by women and animal rescue centres worldwide.

Our Pick

Children should avoid going to a German town, setting four families into a full kitchen for answers as they travel into a parallel-time travel company that spans three generations. Once upon a time, some experts predict that the same will happen. The film is a tale of time travel, and animal rescue centres worldwide.

ECOLOGICO WITH MISS MOTI

Kripa Joshi

Photo9

Zen Bistro

Entertain guests by serving delicious Pad Thai today. It is time to enjoy cooking and sharing delicious food.
Delivery: 12pm (01) 47646038

This page has been a source of inspiration. First Nepal and then Malaysia, and a third cellphone. The first cellphone was a Nokia 3210. This is the best cellphone, and I will put it on until we're in a safe environment. I'll eventually use one of them. My cellphone is a Nokia 3210, the second best cellphone. It will be a bit before the cellphone will hang, but I will put it on until we’re in a safe environment.

Free Netflix documentaries
Netflix has released some of its documentaries for free on YouTube for educational purposes in light of the global coronavirus pandemic. Watch the award-winning documentary Our Planet from Sir David Attenborough to start.

Art exhibition
The Museum of Nepali Arts’ second 360° virtual art exhibition, Reconnection, is a collection of Nepali artists’ masterpieces by some of Nepal’s best traditional artists. Go to the website to start the tour of the museum.

World Press Photo
Browse through the World Press Photo’s archive of powerful award-winning photo graphics and photo stories from around the world.

ONLINE ARCHIVES

Kathmandu, 5 - 11 June

LOCKDOWN TOWN

ONLINE ARCHIVES

Kathmandu, 5 - 11 June

This daily feature on the cornerstone of most local food superstar joints in Kathmandu was much sought throughout the week, bringing the Air Quality Index (AQI) down to the usual moderate levels. Daily average AQI spiked in the range of 150 only once on Sunday. However, with the gradual opening of the lockdown, AQI is expected to rise, though some of the improvements will not be entirely due to the offsetting effect of traffic congestion. People need to continue to rely on the virtual campaigns, which are not a week behind schedule this week.

https://pg.areskot.com/kathmandu-air-quality-meter/

This page has been a source of inspiration. First Nepal and then Malaysia, and a third cellphone. The first cellphone was a Nokia 3210. This is the best cellphone, and I will put it on until we're in a safe environment. I'll eventually use one of them. My cellphone is a Nokia 3210, the second best cellphone. It will be a bit before the cellphone will hang, but I will put it on until we’re in a safe environment.

Free Netflix documentaries
Netflix has released some of its documentaries for free on YouTube for educational purposes in light of the global coronavirus pandemic. Watch the award-winning documentary Our Planet from Sir David Attenborough to start.

Art exhibition
The Museum of Nepali Arts’ second 360° virtual art exhibition, Reconnection, is a collection of Nepali artists’ masterpieces by some of Nepal’s best traditional artists. Go to the website to start the tour of the museum.

World Press Photo
Browse through the World Press Photo’s archive of powerful award-winning photo graphics and photo stories from around the world.

ONLINE ARCHIVES

Kathmandu, 5 - 11 June

This daily feature on the cornerstone of most local food superstar joints in Kathmandu was much sought throughout the week, bringing the Air Quality Index (AQI) down to the usual moderate levels. Daily average AQI spiked in the range of 150 only once on Sunday. However, with the gradual opening of the lockdown, AQI is expected to rise, though some of the improvements will not be entirely due to the offsetting effect of traffic congestion. People need to continue to rely on the virtual campaigns, which are not a week behind schedule this week.

https://pg.areskot.com/kathmandu-air-quality-meter/

This page has been a source of inspiration. First Nepal and then Malaysia, and a third cellphone. The first cellphone was a Nokia 3210. This is the best cellphone, and I will put it on until we're in a safe environment. I'll eventually use one of them. My cellphone is a Nokia 3210, the second best cellphone. It will be a bit before the cellphone will hang, but I will put it on until we’re in a safe environment.

Free Netflix documentaries
Netflix has released some of its documentaries for free on YouTube for educational purposes in light of the global coronavirus pandemic. Watch the award-winning documentary Our Planet from Sir David Attenborough to start.

Art exhibition
The Museum of Nepali Arts’ second 360° virtual art exhibition, Reconnection, is a collection of Nepali artists’ masterpieces by some of Nepal’s best traditional artists. Go to the website to start the tour of the museum.

World Press Photo
Browse through the World Press Photo’s archive of powerful award-winning photo graphics and photo stories from around the world.

ONLINE ARCHIVES

Kathmandu, 5 - 11 June

This daily feature on the cornerstone of most local food superstar joints in Kathmandu was much sought throughout the week, bringing the Air Quality Index (AQI) down to the usual moderate levels. Daily average AQI spiked in the range of 150 only once on Sunday. However, with the gradual opening of the lockdown, AQI is expected to rise, though some of the improvements will not be entirely due to the offsetting effect of traffic congestion. People need to continue to rely on the virtual campaigns, which are not a week behind schedule this week.

https://pg.areskot.com/kathmandu-air-quality-meter/

This page has been a source of inspiration. First Nepal and then Malaysia, and a third cellphone. The first cellphone was a Nokia 3210. This is the best cellphone, and I will put it on until we're in a safe environment. I'll eventually use one of them. My cellphone is a Nokia 3210, the second best cellphone. It will be a bit before the cellphone will hang, but I will put it on until we’re in a safe environment.
Karate Travellers in Kathmandu

Stuck in Nepal’s lockdown, transcontinental martial arts duo decide to make the best of it

Monika Deupala

Their names are so unpronounceable for Nepalis that Gomsingh Erdensureg, has the nickname ‘Ge’, and Giovanni Virardi calls himself ‘Gio’. The two world travellers have been stuck in Nepal since March because of the COVID-19 lockdown, but like it so much here that they have decided not to be repatriated on evacuation flights. Gis and Gio met last year in Laos, and were immediately drawn to each other by their passion for the martial arts. They came to Nepal on a tour, have been here ever since, teaching children karate and taekwondo.

“We considered going back, but Nepal made us feel at home and it’s a great place to explore,” says Ge, who is from Mongolia. Gio is from Italy and says it did not make sense going back to his country at a time when the coronavirus pandemic was at its peak.

Despite their different cultural backgrounds, the two are united by their zeal for martial arts. Besides giving martial arts tutorials to children in an orphanage in Patan, the two have also been regularly recording a ‘Quarantine Self-defence Series’ on the terrace of their house in Swayambhu and posting it on the Internet.

“Karate can have a social focus and can be used as a powerful tool for the empowerment of women and for anti-bullying campaigns,” says Ge, who adds that the lockdown period in Nepal has given them time to train, meditate and reassess their lives.

Ge, 32, was brought up in a nomadic lifestyle in the Mongolian steppes, got tired of a sedentary career in Shanghai and quit for a backpack life. On the other side of the world, thirty-four-year-old Gio also quit his job as a chef in England and also headed out into the world.

Their separate trajectories brought them together in Laos last year, and they decided to explore Asia, pursue their interest in the martial arts.

“I was hooked to Bruce Lee movies when I was a kid, and did not like cartoons,” recalls Gio. “But even he taught me a karate dojo and encouraged me to take part in tournaments.” Ge is also sporty, is experienced in taekwondo and nunchaku, and the two are a perfect fit.

The two put on their dobok karate robes every morning, set their tripod on the terrace to record their choreographed karate tutorials with a backdrop of the stupas on the hill, and post them online. They are also known by their Instagram handle, Karate Travellers.

Every Asian country has its own karate tradition, and the two train with locals to learn

the nuances, and add to their repertoire. Gio explains: “We started to use karate as cross-cultural bridge and martial arts as language to communicate with people from different cultures, and for self-improvement.”

For free-spirited travellers like Ge and Gio, the lockdown could have been like prison, but they have turned it to their advantage.

Says Ge: “We decided to make lemonade out of sour lemon by keeping our minds busy and our body fit.”

With Nepal’s international flight ban set to be lifted in three weeks, the two may not have to wait much longer to go out into the world again.

DOJO ON THE GO

Meet Ge and Gio, the unlikely martial arts aficionados who have been stuck in Nepal after the lockdown and decided to use the time to train children in karate and taekwondo and record online tutorials.
Himalayan New Yorkers tell
Nepalis, Tibetans, and other Himalayan natives in New York’s Queens
neighbourhoods speak of being at the epicentre of the pandemic

Tibetan Community of New York and New Jersey members serve food at Elmhurst Hospital.

Nawang Tsering Gurung, Ross Perlin, Mark Turin, Sienna R Craig, Maya Daurio, and Daniel Kaufman

A successful outcome coming down with the virus herself, an expectant mother, a public health expert, putting his training to use, a teacher navigating the new world of online classes, and an amchi (Tibetan doctor) trying to help frightened patients. Lhakpa, Diki, Sangye, Yeshi, and Kunzorg are just five Himalayan New Yorkers, but their stories of daily life over the last few months contain more lived experience of the current crisis than a thousand headlines and statistics.

Since March 2020, New York City has been a global epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic. Large outbreaks are the fact that thousands of Nepalis, Tibetans, and other Himalayan natives have been at the epicentre of the pandemic, living and working in the Queens neighbourhoods where the virus hit the hardest. Just launched and still evolving, ‘New York COVID-19 Diverse Diaries from a City Under Siege’ is the first concerted attempt to document the impact of the pandemic on this often invisible community.

Nearly every day since April, as many as 10 Himalayan New Yorkers from all walks of life — including lama, Diki, Sangye, Yeshi, and Kunzorg — have been recording short audio diaries from home in their mother tongues (Nepali, Tibetan and Chinese) across New York City to eastern Tibet, and Dangviklal, with English summaries added later to reach a wider audience.

This growing multimedia record — nearly 300 entries totalling dozens of hours — presents a unique portrait of the daily struggles faced by doctors, nurses, and essential workers; the immense pressures on elders, parents and children under quarantine; and the new ways that Himalayan New Yorkers are aiding not just their own struggling communities, but their neighbours and fellow citizens.

New York COVID-19 is a unique collaboration between diaries committed to sharing their experiences and a distributed group of scholars who first came together in 2016 to create Voices of the Himalaya, a project documenting the extraordinary diversity and vitality of Himalayan New York through oral history interviews in a dozen languages.

Beginning with Nawang Tsering Gurung, a young social entrepreneur and community mobiliser originally from the village of Gliling in Upper Mustang the team now brings together long-time scholars of Nepal, Mark Turin and Sienna Craig Turin’s doctoral student Maya Daurio, himself a geographer and GIS specialist with Nepalese experience, and linguist Ross Perlin and Daniel Kaufman from the NYC-based non-profit Endangered Language Alliance, which is committed to supporting linguistic diversity in the city and beyond.

One of the first COVID-19 deaths in the city, on March 23, was that of Auni Subba, a Nepali immigrant and Uber driver in his 40s living in Jackson Heights. By early April, members of the Queer Nepali community alone were reporting hundreds of people seriously ill, including several needing intensive care, with the number of cases still growing rapidly. At the same time, the Urgent Nepal Aid Network for COVID-19 was established as an early mutual aid effort, and an estimated 400 to 500 Tibetan nurses began volunteering for the pandemic, including many at Elmhurst Hospital, which was described as the city’s “number one priority” by NYC mayor Bill de Blasio due to the range of cases there.

The Queena neighbourhoods of Jackson Heights, Sunnyside, and Corona were emerging as the hardest-hit zone in the hardest-hit county in the United States, by close nes, with some 6,600 confirmed cases and over six thousand fatalities recorded in a

population of around 330,000 (as of 16 June). Central Queens is also among the most culturally and linguistically diverse urban areas on the planet.

As the disproportionate impact of the virus in Queens started to become clear, our team responded to the call for help with a plan to help ensure that the Himalayan experience would not remain invisible or be forgotten — by recording and sharing, in real time, the voices of those living through the virus. Free and open to all for non-commercial use, the audio diaries form just one part of an emerging project which also includes 20 ethnographic interviews with Himalayan community leaders, multilingual materials relating to the pandemic and community responses, and a distinct but closely related effort to map the city’s languages.

Community members, first responders, scholars, policymakers, and the general public form the intended audience for this work — both to inform people about what is happening right now, and to increase understanding in the likely event of future public health and social crises.

The diaries make clear that all Himalayan New Yorkers have been affected by a crisis that is more than just a virus. This is also a mental health epidemic, an economic emergency, and an ongoing and lived experience with unprecedented levels of uncertainty. With the virus finally ebbing in New York — 400,000 confirmed cases and 30,000 deaths later — the toll of COVID-19 on the Himalayan community (shackled under ‘Asian-American’ in the public health statistics) is still unclear.

What is certain is that most people know or are related to at least one person, probably many, who have fallen seriously ill or died. As the ‘New York COVID-19’ project makes clear, many were sick and recovered at home without being diagnosed; others are uncertain whether they were ill, or may still be uncomfortable admitting it; many are still understandably anxious; and all have been affected, directly or indirectly, by the socioeconomic crisis that is unfolding in tandem with the pandemic.

Despite these challenges, the community is extraordinarily resilient — and in developing new strength in response to the crisis. The diaries report an intensification of family and community ties and religious practices that were already strong, widespread adherence to and respect for public health measures, and creative mutual aid efforts and community responses that have included individual check-ups on the ill, internet-based programming for isolated elders, organised efforts to navigate government services for those with little non-English language help is available, and much more.

Indeed, beyond organizing and taking care of its own, Himalayan New Yorkers have been doing much further in their professional roles as healthcare professionals, essential workers, and service providers as well as in their social capacities as good neighbours. Along with so much else, the diaries testify to the growing power and visibility of a Himalayan community in New York City that is now also a focal point of the global Himalayan diaspora. Have a listen.

nepaltimes.com

Get an idea of what it’s like, and enjoy the multimedia record, including audio extracts of the survivors.
stories of COVID-19

Diki Bista (Lhoka)
2 April 2020, Expectant Mother

I woke up, washed my face, brushed my teeth, and did basic prayers while making water and rice offerings. I prepared bread, and while eating it, I did Dzongri (prayers) with my family. I went to my mother in Kailas琅曲, even in Nepal, they all stay at home.

After taking with my family, I cleaned up the breakfast dishes, dressed the house, and did yard for forty minutes. I also go to college, but at the moment, all the classes are online, and there are many assignments — I need to spend an hour doing an assignment. Then I make lunch, and while watching a movie, I did a walk in the garden to make the decorations for the house.

Today, I don’t have to worry about food because a friend of mine in the Upper West Side made us some delicious New Food and sent all the way to the house.

I spent some time with my family and friends in Nepal, but I’m more excited in America.

Now when we are in New York, in America, the scared area is our place. Queen, it’s a 10-minute walk from our house to a famous hospital, full of patients. I want to do anything, just stay at home, and pray. Most of my Mustang friends are also in the same situation, most of them are staying at home, watching various Mustang teaching videos and praying.

Sangey Tashi (Khami Tibetan)
26 May 2020, Public Health Expert

Today I went to my work, it was my first day back to work after the lockdown. Every day we have a meeting, and today was the special day. I took the subway instead of driving my car because it would be difficult to park. In the subway, I wasn’t crowded, and I feel like it was safe since people were maintaining social distance.

My office is in Lower Manhattan and there were three of us who arrived on an early train. Around 4 p.m., I came out of my work meeting. Usually around this time the streets would be packed due to rush hour, but now that’s not the case. I see a few people walking around the Fulton Street Tunnel, but I saw very few of them today. Even though taking the stairs are all waiting trains, it’s rare to see people without one.

Yeshi Jigme Gangne (Central Tibetan)
4 May 2020, Language Teacher

I’m feeling well, and my hair is getting longer, so I roll my hair and my father-in-law’s hair is long. All the barbering, I can’t use a hairbrush and I find it difficult to comb it. But during this crisis, it’s easy to go to the hospital, so I need to stay home. My wife is also feeling well today. I don’t really know why, it seems because to stay at home for days on end — and it’s been several days — that I’m feeling at home. I’ve just gone out for several minutes to do some grocery shopping.

There is demand and desire to leave the house, but we’re stuck here out of fear. And then there’s the fluctuation in our schedules — it’s now 12 p.m. and usually used to wake up at 5 or 6 a.m., but now I wake up very late, and it’s not just my family, but most people are living something similar.

Today my daughter was really insisting that we set them play in the backyard, but we didn’t let them leave the house and they were quite frustrated. I, of course, we got some fresh air from our deck, but we didn’t get much sunlight. We need the sunlight on our faces. There is a song in Tibetosha that we don’t know whether we will wake up tomorrow or not, so we have to practice Dharma today.

Lhakpa Dolma Sherpa (Nepali)
14 April 2020, Hospital Nurse

I work at Bhaktapur Hospital, Queens, New York, as a nurse in the Medical Surgical Unit. Currently I am in self-quarantine after I was infected with the COVID-19 on April 1. Today, I feel a little better. I don’t have a fever and I feel a little more energetic. The COVID-19 symptoms begin with fever, cough, and difficulty in breathing. My father lives in one room and in the other in the same apartment, keeping social distance. During this crisis, my father has helped a lot. He’s always been there with love and support, and another with warm water with turmeric. In the morning, my father has been calling me from the door. “Lhakpa Dolma,” and then got up and got me food.

Today for breakfast, my mother prepared rice and eggs. I haven’t actually seen my father for many days. We only connect through phone and facetime. My father prepares the food and even washes the dinner. It’s been more than 15 days that I’ve seen him in person. My father also donates the bathroom, and what I do first thing in the morning is to go to the bathroom and close the door with towel and then come back to my room.

Every morning, I call my family. My mother, my mother, and her husband’s family are in California. Everyone over there is also worried about me. Every morning we spend an hour or two together on a group video call on Instagram. I also contact my friends and family. I want to connect everyone. During this self-quarantine, what I’ve realized is that we have so many things to be grateful.

Dr. Kuneloch Teeten (Ando Tibetan)
7 May 2020, Tibetan Doctor

Many people in New York City are suffering from a wide range of physical and emotional conditions, manifested by quarantine and the ongoing pandemic. The most prominent of their complaints are anxiety, stress, and depression.

These extraordinary circumstances create hope in many people’s life and since they need to sustain an endless routine. As a result, we are hearing about muscle stiffness, upper back pain, chest pain, and so on.

They come to me and I start making suggestions to reduce these pains. I have been asking them to do full body practices. The main problem is their mind, whether they are doing physical movements such as yoga. Beyond movements, I have also been suggesting them to sometimes change their diet, eat for emotional problems involving, for example, their diet. Who are these people, they may prefer to do physical movements such as yoga. Beyond movements, I have also been suggesting them to sometimes change their diet, eat for emotional problems involving, for example, their diet. Who are these people, they may prefer to do physical movements such as yoga.
After 10 weeks Nepalis start to return

Reparation flights for Nepalis stranded abroad finally begin amidst mixed messages, flourished guidelines

Upasana Khadka

A few outrage on social media about the government not following its own guidelines about repatriating Nepali migrants stranded abroad. Stranded and desperate workers are likely to come home this week.

Fear with corruption amid the repatriation flights, the government has altered nearly three months of lock-down announced a tentative list of chartered flights to bring back Nepalis stranded abroad. On Tuesday, the first two flights following the government’s pre-planned schedule and chartered by the Kuwaiti government, landed with undocumented workers.

The 324 female passengers in two flights from Kuwait City who arrived in Kathmandu Thursday had spent 49 days in transit camps set up by the Kuwaiti government for undocumented workers. Of the 7,000 undocumented Nepalis, half opted for the amnesty, and are being flown home gracefully on Jazeera Airways.

There was outrage in social media last week after the first flights on 5 June from UAE and Burton brought back passengers who were not on the priority list of those needing immediate evacuation. The list included undocumented and laid off workers, women, pregnant and disabled Nepalis and those stranded after short-term visas expired. Then, on Tuesday night, 11 Nepalis were flown back on a Nepali Airlines direct flight from Canberra which had dropped Australians and New Zealanders stuck in Nepal.

“When the government first announced that repatriations would begin a couple of weeks back, we were very jubilant,” says Lamzi, a Nepali worker on the phone from Kuwait. “Every evening for a few days, we danced to some happy Nepali music.”

But soon, the dancing stopped and the frustration turned to frustration as the days dragged on and there was no word about flights. Nepalis in an all-embassy quarantine started raising slogans against the embassy and the Nepali government, taking to social media to protest.

“We at least get decent food and have air conditioning in the school where we have our camp. There are some men in camps in the desert who have it worse,” Lamzi adds.

There is even more anger in UAE, which has 17,375 stranded Nepalis who have registered to return, but the ones who came back last week were not from the embassy’s priority list. Some of them marched to the Nepali Embassy in Abu Dhabi to protest, and had to be dispersed by police (photos). “The embassy does not pick up our phone, how else are we supposed to reach them?” asks one Nepali undocumented worker who has been providing updates to Nepali Times over the past weeks.

“They called the police, and sent us back without any information.”

The 5 June flight permission was obtained on the assumption that the UAE government would sponsor the flight of the most vulnerable Nepalis selected by the embassy in Abu Dhabi, including pregnant women. Instead, the plan veered and the buses in communication and coordination led to two companies using that permission to charter the flight to take their employees back to Nepal.

For workers in Kuwait or the UAE, the hardest part has been the uncertainty and the waiting game with the lack of clear communication and the mixed messages driven by speculation on social media. The government on Wednesday finally published a timetable for evacuation flights that includes cities in the Gulf, Malaysia as well as the US, UK, Australia, Japan and Southeast Asia.

In Kuwait, Lamzi says the wait was getting unbearable. “They assure us that flights will resume, but it never happens. I have packed and unpacked my bag three times. Why doesn’t the government just publish a schedule of flights and stop this suspense?”

Mya is also an undocumented worker in the UAE, who got a letter from the embassy last month with written assurance that he will be put on the first flight home. When the 8 June flight took off, it was not on it. But he was shocked to find that his local government in Gorakhpur had him on the passenger manifest of the first flight who needed to be quarantined. He asks, “Does no one owe me an explanation?”

Besides the lack of communications and coordination, there are also practical shortcomings in the repatriation strategy. The UAE government has said that the air fare of returnees should be paid by the workers and has published a price list for tickets, but many have used up all their savings and the charter flights are more expensive.

How can a jobless worker reliant on charity for food for months be expected to afford tickets?” asks a UAE-based Nepali community leader.

The other government requirement is that returnees should have a certificate proving negative COVID-19 status, but workers in the Gulf countries including the UAE say that is challenging. None of the passengers on the first flight from Sharjah were tested.

For the last 10 weeks, the government did not allow its nationals home because it said it needed to prepare for their return. But the first flights last week showed that even with the Nepali Army in charge, the preparations were inadequate with ad hoc decisions on who got to fly back first, no evidence of ramped up PCR tests on arrival, and under-equipped quarantine centres in the districts that could be horrific for the disease.

About 25,000 Nepalis are expected to fly back in the next few weeks, and experts say embassies need to communicate more frequently and clearly with workers about their flight status, the government in Kathmandu needs to coordinate better between ministries, and provide help to workers who cannot afford to buy tickets and do not have employer or host country support.

Nepalis’ embassies abroad are under severe resource constraints, and have to carry out what is directed by the decision makers in Kathmandu. But there is a sore need for transparency in the selection process with frequent and honest updates. There is now a semblance of order with the timetable and ticket price list published, but there is still a chance of those with cloud cutting the queue.

Thursday’s two Jazeera Airways flights full of undocumented Nepali female workers was paid for by the Kuwaiti government. Rita, a Nepali worker who has spent the past one and half months at the transit camp set up by the Kuwaiti government was on the flight because she is pregnant.

“It is bittersweet for me. I can’t wait to go home but my husband is also in Kuwait although not part of the amnesty program as he is documented. He is stuck in his room without work and would have gone home with me had it been possible,” Rita said on the phone. “The baby is still four months away, so I am hopeful that he will be able to join me in Nepal to welcome our daughter.”

Some names have been changed.