



INFOJAPAN

Embassy of Japan in Nepal

Vol. 56 August 2020

Ambassador's Message



The lovely summer season has arrived, however, this year our world has completely changed due to the outbreak of COVID-19. This Info Japan is a special issue, in which we ask our Nepali and Japanese friends to share their messages, their thoughts and how they are working in this difficult situation. In this issue,

Nepali friends write about their experiences in Japan, especially when they visited as students and when they joined our invitation programs. We also have a message from Mr. TAKEUCHI Hirotaka, Professional Mountain Climber who visited our Embassy last November and gave a lecture, to mark the 50th anniversary of the first Japanese summit of Sagarmatha. Through his message, Mr. Takeuchi tells us of his love for Nepal.

Japan and Nepal established diplomatic relations in 1956 and we have been enjoying good friendship since then. As the new era “Reiwa” commenced last year in Japan, President Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari visited Tokyo to attend the Ceremonies of the Accessions to the Throne of His Majesty the Emperor. This was followed by the visit of Mr. NAKAYAMA Norihiro, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, to Kathmandu this January. As well as high-level exchanges, a number of people-to-people exchanges have contributed towards the good bilateral relationship between Japan and Nepal. The COVID-19 outbreak has made it difficult to visit each other at the present time; but I believe this friendship between Japan and Nepal will not be affected.

The Japanese Government announced a “New Lifestyle” to cope with the COVID-19 situation. This means we all have to

possess a proper understanding to protect ourselves and others from COVID-19 infection. In order to minimize the infection, we have to avoid the “3Cs: Closed spaces, Crowded places and Close-contact settings.” In this new world, each one of us is literally requested to put ourselves into the shoes of others. If a friend of yours seems to be cautious to meet in person, then what is the solution? You are required to consider the wellbeing of others at all times; which actually means each one of us has to think about others in a true sense. Particularly as all of us live and share this society.

Diplomatic relations are based on the understanding of each other's country's circumstances. It is premised by thinking about the other country's situation and helping each other. This approach can enhance friendships, which will lead to world peace and to making the world a better place. Now is the time for all of us to put ourselves in each others' shoes. Until today, Japan and Nepal have been enjoying a great friendship - established through the various efforts made by a number of people in both countries. For example, this year marks the Golden Jubilee - 50 years' anniversary - of the first Japanese summit of Sagarmatha, which was achieved by Mr. UEMURA Naomi and Mr. MATSUURA Teruo. Japan and Nepal share many of these wonderful memories, which will contribute towards deepening our good friendship further.

I think many of you are waiting to meet your friends who live in Japan and Nepal, and want to ensure that those friends are in good health. With this too in mind, in order to see our friendship flourish for future generations, we would like to continue to find ways to work with the Nepal Government and Nepali friends.

SAIGO Masamichi

Embassy of Japan in Nepal

2020 Spring Conferment of Japanese Decorations on Foreign Nationals

The Government of Japan announced the foreign recipients of the 2020 Spring Imperial Decorations on 29th April 2020 and included is former Speaker of the House of Representatives of Nepal, Mr. Ram Chandra Poudel.

He was awarded in recognition of his contributions towards strengthening the relationship between Japan and Nepal and will receive the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun.

Mr. Poudel, now 76-years-old, contributed to the activation of contacts between parliamentarians of the two countries. He established the Nepal-Japan Parliamentary Friendship Group in

1999 when he was the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Nepal. Mr. Poudel was the first Chairman of the League from the beginning until 2017.

He was also actively involved in the promotion of bilateral relations by receiving many VIPs from Japan to date such as then His Highness Crown Prince Akihito and Her Highness Crown Princess Michiko, Prime Minister MORI Yoshiro, Mr. KIUCHI Minoru, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, and others. He had also participated in the 40 year, 50 year and 60 year anniversaries of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and made congratulatory statements.



Japan Extends Grant Aid for Development of Digital Elevation Model and Orthophoto

The Government of Japan has extended grant assistance of 1.17 billion Japanese Yen, equivalent to Rs. 1,319.9 million, to the Government of Nepal for the Development of Digital Elevation Model and Orthophoto.

Ambassador Saigo and Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Sishir Kumar Dhungana signed notes to this effect at the Ministry of Finance on 25th May 2020.

Another set of grant agreements for implementing the program was signed by Ms. ASAKUMA Yumiko, Chief

Representative of JICA Nepal, and Mr. Shreekrishna Nepal, Joint Secretary, the International Economic Cooperation and Coordination Division of the Ministry of Finance.

Nepal, like Japan, is a country prone to natural disasters such as earthquakes, landslides and floods. In particular, floods during the monsoon in the Terai region cause loss of human lives and damage property every year. There were large-scale inundations in 2017 and in 2019 and ways to develop and improve a flood warning and evacuation system had remained an urgent need.



Japan Extends Grant Aid for the Economic and Social Development Programme



On On 25th June 2020, Ambassador Saigo and the Joint Secretary of Ministry of Finance, Mr. Shreekrishna Nepal signed the notes for a grant assistance of up to 300 million Japanese Yen, equivalent to Rs. 333 million, from Government of Japan to the Government of Nepal for the Economic and Social Development Programme.

The assistance comes at a time when the COVID-19 infections have rapidly increased globally affecting human lives, economic and social activities and the dignity of people. Many countries have been trying to use resources to take steps based on lessons learned in the past and cases of other countries to tackle the virus. Unfortunately, many also face difficulties to provide health and medical services, and this has already severely damaged economic and social activities and wellbeing of the people.



Japanese Scholarships for Government Officers

The Government of Japan has extended grant assistance of up to 365 million Japanese Yen, equivalent to Rs. 407 million, to the Government of Nepal for implementing the Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS) Project.

Ambassador Saigo and Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Sishir Kumar Dhungana signed notes to this effect at the Ministry of Finance on 8th July 2020.

Another set of grant agreements for implementing the program was signed by Ms. Asakuma Yumiko, Chief Representative of JICA Nepal, and Mr. Shreekrishna Nepal, Joint Secretary, the International Economic Cooperation and Coordination Division of the Ministry of Finance.

The JDS grant offers Nepal's young government officials two years Master's Degree courses and three-year Doctoral level courses at Japanese universities. After completing studies the JDS Fellows are expected to engage in formulating

and implementing socio-economic development plans and programs and evolve as leaders and change agents for development in their respective countries.

Nepal has had 80 JDS Fellows since 2016 and another 22 government officials are expected to go to Japan in 2020 as new JDS Fellows.





Japan Extends Support for School Sector Development Program



The Government of Japan extended grant assistance of up to 300 million Japanese Yen, equivalent to Rs. 335 million to the Government of Nepal for implementing the School Sector Development Program (SSDP) on 23rd July 2020. Ambassador Saigo and Mr. Sishir Kumar Dhungana, Secretary of the Ministry of Finance signed notes to this effect.

Another set of grant agreements for implementing the program were signed by Ms. Asakuma Yumiko, Chief Representative of JICA Nepal, and Mr. Shreekrishna Nepal, Joint Secretary, the International Economic Cooperation and Coordination Division of the Ministry of Finance.

Education is an investment in human capital and the foundation of a nation's sustainable social and economic development. The vision of SSDP is to contribute to the development of self-sustainable, competitive, innovative and value oriented citizens for the socio-economic transformation of the nation.

Message from Japanese Mountain Climber, Mr. TAKEUCHI Hirotaka

Mr. Takeuchi is the first Japanese mountaineer to successfully summited all 14 mountains in the world over 8,000m, including eight in Nepal. He began his conquest from Mt. Makalu in 1995 and completed after summitting the Dhaulagiri on 26th May 2012. It took 17 years for him to accomplish the remarkable achievement and he became the 29th climber to successfully summitting all 14 mountains above 8000 meters. In order to commemorate this success, the Japan Anniversary Association officially registered the 26th of May as "Hirotaka Takeuchi: 14 8,000m mountains summit day." On November last year the Embassy of Japan successfully organized a talk program here in Kathmandu by Mr. Takeuchi.

This year marks the 50th Anniversary and Golden Jubilee of the first Japanese ascent of Mt. Everest. On this memorable occasion, Mr. Takeuchi has this message:

This year, the Golden Jubilee of Japan's first successful summit of Everest, I planned a project entitled "A memorial-climbing project: commemoration of the 50 year's anniversary of the first Japanese team to summit the peak of Everest". This first ever summit by a Japanese team was achieved by an adventurer, Mr. Naomi Uemura, and a mountaineer, Mr. Teruo Matsuura. I planned to stand on the peak of Everest on 11th May – the exact date Mr. Uemura and Mr. Matsuura succeeded 50 years ago.

I planned to show my respects to my two predecessors, by standing the peak of Everest on the same day as they did. This is more evidence of the long-lasting friendship between Japan and Nepal - which has also flourished through the history of mountain climbing. I also would like to express my appreciation to Nepal. As a country, Nepal raised me to become a mountain climber.



Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 situation, I had to cancel the project. As my heart has always been with Nepal, I decided to travel to Nepal anyway, if only in my heart. In my imagination, I prepared equipment in Kathmandu and started to climb the mountain from Everest Base Camp. Indeed, my heart was on the peak of Everest on 11th May.

I shared my imaginative Everest challenge by SNS and posted my daily schedule as if I was there, aided by a number of photos which I took during my past visits. Many Japanese seem to be interested in my project, particularly because of the COVID-19 they had to stay indoors for a while. I believe this project may attract Japanese to learn more about Nepal and Everest. I must say that those who enjoyed my imaginary travel to Everest via SNS, also had their hearts in Nepal.

I really look forward to visiting Nepal again, as I usually and always do. I shall meet my Nepali friends there and of course, definitely revisit the mountains of Nepal.

Friendship Between the Embassy of Japan in Nepal and JUAAN (Japanese Universities Alumni Association, Nepal)



Message from Dr. Prem Prasad Paudel (President, JUAAN)

Nepali students have more than a century old relationship with Japan and its people. The Government of Nepal sent a group of eight students to Japan in 1902 for higher study. This important milestone initiative has created a history for 1) being the beginning of cultural exchanges between two countries; 2) being the first Nepalese to land in Japan, and 3) being the first

Nepalese to go abroad for higher studies. Shortly after the diplomatic relation between Nepal and Japan began in 1956, MEXT scholarships started in 1957. Since then Nepali students are annually receiving higher education opportunities in Japan, which is also transferring knowledge, technology and culture. A recent survey has shown that about 85,321 Nepalese are living in Japan, among which 27,000 are students.

The first group of Nepali students returned in 1905 bringing with them seeds. For the first time persimmon, chestnut, chrysanthemum and wisteria seeds were sowed in Kathmandu and the resulting trees and blooms are still visible. The Government of Japan is always emphasized education to build-up a nation and has continuously provided the opportunity of scholarships (MEXT, JDS), and training (through JICA) in addition to its support for infrastructures, health, agriculture, and the environment sectors.

The year 2002 was marked as the completion of a century since the first group of Nepali students arrived in Japan. In JUAAN history, it was a memorable inspiration that former Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, Mr. Kobayashi Haruhisa, encouraged Japanese graduates to organize an Alumni and make a team/ institution based approach to promote mutual learning and friendship between the people of both countries. Another interesting and relevant fact is that one of the cabinet ministers of the Meiji Cabinet in 1902 was the great grand-father of current Ambassador of Japan, H.E. Mr. Saigo Masamichi.

All Nepalese students who have studied in Japan under either Monbukagakusho scholarships or non-Monbukagakusho programs for more than one year are unifying under the umbrella of JUAAN. Since its establishment JUAAN has been receiving continuous support from the Embassy of Japan for fostering mutual relationships. For the past 23 years, JUAAN has managed the Sakai Lions Club and Imanishi Fellowship Trust. The main aim of this trust is to promote Nepal-Japan relationships through publications, research and various promotional activities.

The Embassy of Japan is providing annual support to carry out a number of activities like Benkyokai, orientation for newly selected Monbukagakusho students, journal publications, annual functions, education fairs, historical site renovation (Changu Narayan temple), and other similar institutional strengthening activities. In addition, it provides opportunity to participate in a number of events related with Nepal-Japan relations. For instance, JUAAN participated in the first Nepal-Japan Economic and Technical Co-operation Exhibition in 1982 and the commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relation and other similar formal and informal events.

On behalf of myself and the entire JUAAN family, I would like to extend our sincere thanks and gratitude to the Embassy of Japan which has been tirelessly extending cooperation and encouragement to JUAAN.

My Research and Efforts to Tackle COVID-19

- Dr. Basu Dev Pandey



Dr. Basu Dev Pandey obtained a PhD in molecular technology (including polymerase chain reaction and sequencing) from a Japanese University. This knowledge is very useful in laboratory decision making and policy. He also participated in JICA training on viral diseases, where he learned about several technologies for diagnosis of infectious diseases, particularly viral diseases. He serves as a Director of Epidemiology

and Disease Control Division (EDCD) under Ministry of Health and Population, Nepal. The following is a message by Dr. Pandey:

I have been working in the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division, particularly on arthropod-borne viral diseases, including Dengue Fever, Japanese Encephalitis, Chikungunya Virus, Zika Virus infections and other tropical diseases. My research spans from the clinical, epidemiological, and molecular to the operational levels in disease control. I worked for many years, until February 2020, as an infectious diseases physician and as a Director at the Surka Raj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital. I also served many rural areas of Nepal for more than 30 years.

Since March 2020, I am leading as the IHR focal point of Nepal. I have published more than 100 scientific peer reviewed papers in national and international journals.

Education:

- Group training course in research in tropical medicine: January to September 1995. (I was posted in the Department of Virology, Institute of Tropical Medicine, Nagasaki University, where I learn tropical medicine and research in viral diseases during JICA organized training.)
- Graduate School, Nagasaki University, Nagasaki, Japan: PhD. 2000 March (This course followed the JICA training when Professor Akira Igarashi invited me to further study viral diseases as a Monbusho recipient.)
- I served as a visiting professor in the Department of Molecular Epidemiology, Institute of Medicine, Nagasaki University in 2001 to 2003. I am currently serving as a visiting Scientist to Nagasaki University.
- Institute of Medicine, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal: MD, 1991.

At present I am leading the preparedness, surveillance, case investigation and contact tracing and response for COVID-19, as a Director of EDCC under Ministry of Health and Population. This post includes the following activities:

- Monitor cases by utilizing the regular EWARS system for cases.
- Develop guidelines, protocols, SOP etc.
- Collect data of all cases and report to the MoHP and maintain flow of information.
- Form a team for contact tracing and case investigation.
- Coordination with all the laboratories including national and provincial.
- Coordination at all level, federal, provincial, local.
- Response and case management in the dedicated hospitals.
- Report to the Ministry of Health and Population.
- Regular reporting to WHO as IHR (International Health Regulation) focal person.
- Facilitate and coordinate with all Diplomatic Missions based in Nepal on health issues.

COVID-19 and its Preventive Measures

- Dr. Sher Bahadur Pun, PhD (University of Nagasaki, Japan)



The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome-2 (SARS-CoV-2) is a member of the family of coronaviruses that causes Corona Virus Disease 19, known as COVID-19. It was first reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 31st December 2019 in Wuhan city of China. As of 14th July, coronavirus has affected 216 countries and territories around the world. Nepal reported its first COVID-19 case on 23rd January 2020; being someone who had returned from Wuhan, China. Since then, coronavirus have been detected in all provinces of Nepal.

COVID-19 symptoms appear usually 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Fever, breathing difficulty, cough and tiredness are the main symptoms of COVID-19. Recently many countries added new symptoms i.e. loss or change in smell or taste, into their COVID-19 symptom lists. In fact, some researchers have suggested that loss of smell (anosmia) can be regarded as an early symptom of COVID-19. In Nepal, it is not clear if these new symptoms are seen among COVID-19 patients. Some of the COVID-19 patients, however, shared their experiences (with me) about anosmia during their illness period. It shows that perhaps physicians did not ask about these new symptoms during patient examination. Very recently, researchers in the US observing the increasing prevalence of blood clots problems in the heart, kidney and/ or brain in COVID-19 patients. Nevertheless, such complications have not been reported in Nepal, although it should not be under-estimated when examining COVID-19 cases.

In February 2020, the WHO-China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) reported that asymptomatic COVID-19 is unclear and appears to be relatively rare. Contrary to this report, according to the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division (EDCD), at least 95% of COVID-19 patients did not show any symptoms at all. This is perhaps the most interesting and unique observation regarding symptoms of COVID-19 in Nepal. However, it is a serious public health concern because the virus may be able to spread through asymptomatic COVID-19 patients into the community.

Clinical symptoms of COVID-19 are non-specific and overlap with other infections, particularly the influenza virus. Influenza usually peaks in March and August in Nepal. This means it will become difficult to distinguish between COVID-19 and the influenza virus solely based on symptoms. Therefore, laboratory test is a must to identify COVID-19 in suspected patients. Currently, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) is considered to be the gold standard for identification of SARS-CoV-2. PCR and rapid diagnostic test (RDT) kits are being used to detect SARS-CoV-2 in Nepal.

At present, no medication is recommended to treat COVID-19. Nearly 80% of COVID-19 patients develop a mild to moderate

disease, which do not require any treatment. About 15% develop a severe disease that requires oxygen therapy and other supportive treatment. Five percent of infected patients develop severe illness with complications requiring intensive care unit treatment/ mechanical ventilations. In a recent study, a steroid called dexamethasone was found effective in reducing deaths in severely ill patients. Another, Remdesivir, an antiviral drug, has already been approved for COVID-19 treatment in many countries including the US, the UK, Japan and European countries. Presently, there are no medicines that are approved for the treatment of COVID-19 in the national guideline. In Nepal, almost all patients with COVID-19 did not require any treatment, since they were found to be asymptomatic and did not feel any of the signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

A vaccine could be the best option to stop the spread of pandemic COVID-19. There are several candidate vaccines under clinical evaluation across the world. Even so, vaccines against COVID-19 cannot be expected before early next year. Before a vaccine is developed and approved it is important to take safety measure to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Physical distancing, face mask, eye protection and hand hygiene are considered to be the main preventive measures to prevent spread and control the COVID-19 infection. Physical distancing means keeping a distance of at least two meters from others. Singing, loud speech or screaming may contribute to the transmission of the virus in the community. Thus, wearing a face mask in public is especially important and the mask should cover the mouth and the nose. In Nepal, however, many people do not wear face masks accurately, and even pull the mask down when talking with other people. Many people even do not maintain a two meter physical distance in public places/ areas. Avoiding these preventive measures will result in more transmission at the population level, and ultimately enter into a stage of community transmission. At this stage the elderly, and those with pre-existing medical conditions are at increased risk of severe illness with COVID-19.

In conclusion, COVID-19 is a disease caused by a newly discovered virus, SARS-CoV-2, and has been reported in more than 216 countries around the world. Up until today, there is no specific medicine or vaccine to treat or prevent COVID-19. Thus, the most effective way to prevent or avoid COVID-19 infection is to strictly adhere to COVID-19 preventive measures.

(Dr. Pun is Coordinator of the Clinical Research Unit, Sukraraj Topical & Infectious Disease Hospital, Teku, Kathmandu)

Prioritizing 'Preventive Health Care'- a Crucial Lesson Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic!



- Dr. Roshan Bhandari

With the numbers of affected individuals peaking daily, the COVID-19 pandemic has become a major concern for the people and the governments across the world. It has significantly created crisis at different levels i.e. individual, as well as public health, people's psychology, and economics. An infectious disease caused by a newer strain of coronavirus, COVID-19, primarily spreads from an infected

individual via coughing, sneezing or by touching contaminated surfaces. As the disease transmission progresses to 'community level' in most of the affected countries, the intensity of its spread and infectiousness has been evoking fear ever since the start of its outbreak.

While researchers and scientists across the globe are struggling every second to find a potential cure for the disease, the measures of 'preventive health care' are still the backbone of infection control and prevention! As I have been practicing healthcare and medicine

as an intern doctor in my university hospital, I have experienced that simple yet effective domains of preventive medicine like segregation of symptomatic people by screening and triage, proper hand washing techniques, scientific use of masks etc., play significant roles in breaking the transmission channel, and equally in reducing chaos and fear among individuals.

I vividly remember my visit to Japan a few years back as a Nepalese delegate for the JENESYS-Batch II (Health) - a youth exchange program. Back then, I was really mesmerized by the level of preparedness of the program co-coordinators! Although there was not any local or global disease outbreak at that time, we were screened for any symptoms (fever, cough etc) before departure, on arrival, and daily during our programs in Japan as a preventative measure. We were provided with masks, gloves and hand sanitizers for our day to day use. Anyone with signs or symptoms would be segregated and taken good care of. Sanitation was always a top priority. And yes, these are the preventive techniques that every single person in the world is advocating today!

Although these are basic and tiny acts of day to day life, they carry a potential to create a huge impact on infection prevention and control. While most of us are still lacking in adapting to significant healthy habits, I found those healthy habits in use back then in Japan. The people were so concerned regarding the correct ways of using masks, proper hand-washing techniques, and the principles of social distancing etc. Although the country is far advanced in science and technology, the people never failed to focus on the simple and basic principles of personal and environmental cleanliness!

In a nutshell, the prioritization of proper preventive measures is a must in this global chaotic scenario created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Every single person should be made aware in this regard to help in the effective prevention and control of the disease.

(Dr. Bhandari, an intern doctor at Kathmandu University Teaching Hospital, visited Japan under the JENESYS program in 2019.)

The Noble Effort of Kobe City is Inspirational

- Mr. Ghanashyam Khadka

When something good happens at the time of a crisis, the despair and anguish surrounding your heart seems to vanish, leaving you with a feeling of relief.

This happened to me recently as I heard of the noble efforts of Kobe City in Japan. The new project of Kobe City Government, in collaboration with Mediaroid Company, aims to win the battle against Covid-19 by devising a robotic system. The system is expected to be useful when the second wave of the virus hits the city. According to the Kobe City Government, the system contains a remotely operated fully automated robot that will collect samples and conduct PCR tests. Additionally, the robot will handle nursing care; delivering meals and medicine to patients. It will also monitor the vital signs of infected people. This robotic system designed to fight Covid-19 is the first of its kind in the world and is projected to be in full operation by October 2020. The system will increase the capabilities of testing, reduce the work load of hospitals and the government, and most importantly, it will help prevent health workers being exposed to the virus.

Kobe City is known to be one of the most resilient cities in the world as it quickly raised itself from the dust of the disaster caused by the 7.2 magnitude earthquake in 1995. Last year I had an opportunity to visit this beautiful city and was amazed to see its reconstruction. This reconstruction has made it even more developed and attractive. The robotic system, which has already been receiving applause, will bring fame to the city, and will make its name shine once again. The system will come in operation in the near future and I hope global humanity will benefited by the noble efforts of Kobe City.

(Mr. Ghanashyam Khadka, Senior Sub Editor, Kantipur National Daily visited Japan on an invitation program by the Government of Japan last September.)



Teacher Training in Japan

The Embassy of Japan facilitated the Japan Foundation's teacher training program on "Japanese Teaching Method Program for Teachers of Specific Skill Worker Candidates" late last year.

Mr. Rabindra Maharjan, Mr. Deepak Bhandari, Mr. Binod Basyal, Mr. Shreejan Bhansakarya, Ms. Sharada Aryal and Ms. Subhadra Rajbhandari participated in this program from 19th November to 18th December, 2019.

This year from 18th February to 19th March, Mr. Sanjay Shrestha, Mr. Sunil Bajracharya, Mr. Nibesh Dangol, Mr. Binaya Shahi, Mr. Rajendra KC and Ms. Shakuntala Pahari participated in this teacher training program.

The above participants said that they got an opportunity to improve their language skills and teaching methodologies, furthermore they gained better understanding of Japanese culture and society through this program.



Embassy of Japan

Tel. 4426680, E-mail: cultural-emb@km.mofa.go.jp, URL : <https://www.np.emb-japan.go.jp>

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