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Dear readers of Info Japan,

In this cold month, we would like to share with you our Embassy's activities to date, and messages from our Nepali friends who studied and had research experience in Japan, and are now actively contributing to society in Nepal. Wrap yourself up warmly and enjoy reading!

We hope the year 2021 will be full of happiness for all.

2020 Autumn Conferment of Japanese Decorations on Foreign Nationals

The Government of Japan announced the foreign recipients of the 2020 Autumn Imperial Decorations on 3rd November, 2020. Among the recipients are Nepal's Former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ramesh Nath Pandey. Mr. Pandey has been awarded in recognition of his contributions towards strengthening the relationship between Japan and Nepal. He will receive the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun.



Mr. Pandey, as the then Minister of Tourism, was patron of the Japan-Nepal-China trilateral expedition to Mt. Everest in 1986. It was also during his tenure as Information and Communication Minister in 2002 that Nepal issued a stamp depicting Ekai Kawaguchi, a Japanese monk who was the first Japanese visitor to Nepal. In 2005, as Foreign Minister, Mr. Pandey visited Japan with Crown Prince Paras and Crown Princess Himani, to open the Nepal Pavilion in the

Aichi Expo '05. At the time he had close personal relations with Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, the former Prime Minister of Japan. The two had worked with each other to help organize the 50-year anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 2006.

Japanese Decorations are conferred upon foreigners twice a year on 29th April and 3rd November, concurrently with the conferment of decorations and medals on Japanese nationals. The Order of the Rising Sun is bestowed upon individuals of merit

in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the nation or public. This is also conferred upon foreign nationals who have made notable contributions to the promotion of relations between Japan and other countries in areas such as politics and diplomacy, research and education, medicine and social welfare, economy and industry, and culture and sports.



Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP)



The Japanese Government provides non-refundable financial assistance to NGOs, hospitals, primary schools, research institutions, and other non-profit organizations to support community level socio-economic development projects under the Grant assistance for Grassroots Projects (GGP) program. It has so far provided such assistance to different grassroots community projects in Nepal. Some of those projects are discussed in the following section.

Equipment Assistance for Treating Diabetic Retinopathy

The Charge d'Affaires a.i. of Japan to Nepal, Mr. YOSHIOKA Yuzo, signed a grant contract with Dr. Chet Raj Pant, Chairperson, Nepal Netra Jyoti Sangh, for installing medical equipment for the treatment of patients with diabetic retinopathy at Kirtipur Eye Hospital on 6th November, 2020.



The project is funded under the GGP of the Japanese Government and involves a grant of USD 154,100 (about NPR 18.35 million). The project will support the installation of medical equipment including a green laser, slit

lamp adapter, slit lamp, laser lens, retina laser lens, non-contact tonometer (NCT), and optical coherence tomography (OCT) for investigation and laser therapy of diabetic retinopathy.

Nepal Netra Jyoti Sangh, established in 1978, has been managing Kirtipur Eye Hospital since 2017.

It has been offering medical eye services across the country and organizing regular eye screening camps in sub-urban and remote areas.

Hostel for Blind Women

The Charge d'Affaires a.i. of Japan to Nepal, Mr. Yoshioka, signed a grant contract to support construction of a hostel for blind women in Kageshwori, Manohara Municipality on 6th November, 2020. The Project is funded under the GCP and involves a grant of USD 95,740 (about NPR 11.4 million).



The agreement was signed between the Embassy of Japan and Mr. Ramesh Pokharel, President of the Nepal Association of the Blind, a Nepalese Non-Governmental Organization.

The Nepal Association of the Blind runs a hostel for blind female students who come to Kathmandu from remote areas to seek better education opportunities. However, the existing hostel could not accommodate everyone and therefore this project is expected to contribute towards supporting access of blind women to education.

Mental Health Therapeutic Center

The Charge d'Affaires a.i. of Japan to Nepal, Mr. Yoshioka, signed a grant contract with Mr. Matrika Prasad Devkota, Executive Director of KOSHISH, for building a Mental Health Therapeutic Center at Pharping in Kathmandu District on 11th November, 2020.



The project is funded under the GGP and comprises a grant of USD 296,856 (about NPR 35.36 million). The project aims to enhance therapeutic services for abandoned women with mental health and psycho-social disabilities by building a therapeutic center to provide treatment in a safe environment.

KOSHISH is a non-governmental organization that has been working since 2008 to ensure persons with psychological disabilities are able to live independently with dignity, and are included in the community as equals. It has been running a transit home for women to support their recovery from mental illnesses.

Nepali Graduates from Japanese University for Science Diplomacy

Sunil Babu Shrestha, Dr. Eng., P.Eng. • Vice-Chancellor Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) • Email: sunilbabushrestha@nast.org.np

Introduction:

The Government of Nepal sent eight students to Japan to study science and technology in 1902. Since then there has been an increasing trend for Nepali students and researchers to go to Japan for study. Being a PhD graduate of the University of Japan, my experiences also suggests that Japan is one of the best destinations for study in the field of science and technology. When I visited the website of the Embassy of Japan in Nepal, I read that, based on the records of the Japanese Universities Alumni Association, Nepal (JUAAN), which is an alumni of Japanese Universities and Institutions, as of 2002, 125 Nepalese students have come back home from Japan. Among them, 15 are medical doctors, 50 are engineers, and the rest are in humanities, natural science, languages, home science, environmental science, journalism, law, etc. It gives clear picture that most of the graduates from Japan are in the field of science and technology. The majority of the students who studied and returned from Japan are employed in the government and public sectors and are contributing significantly towards nation building.



Technology (NAST), which is the apex body of the country with a mandate for the overall development of science and technology in Nepal, is also leading in the capacity of its Vice-Chancellor who is a PhD graduate from a Japanese university. Many scientists and technologists are involved in research and innovation activities in NAST and other institutions have returned from Japan after their study or training. In summary, we can say that the knowledge and skills acquired by Nepali scientists and technologists in Japan during their study, research or training have been put to proper use in Nepal for modernization and advancement of science and technology, giving services to people and contributing for the overall development of the nation. Many more achievements can be hoped for as the number of returnees is ever increasing. I think, besides the subject matter, experiences of Japanese work culture, human values, process of advancement of science and technology, development balance between nature and modernization learned from Japan must have motivated them well towards contributing to Nepali society and the country as a whole.

Contribution:

Nepali scientists and engineers who studied in Japan have made remarkable contributions in the field of agriculture by introducing useful equipment and machinery, which eases agriculture activities. A notable number are in the teaching profession in universities and colleges contributing towards developing human resources required for the country. Medicine is another important sector where doctors who studied and got trainings from Japanese universities and institutions have been doing well in public and private hospitals and clinics inside the country. For combating the recent Covid-19 pandemic, Nepali scientists and doctor who studied in Japan are playing leading roles in awareness generation, diagnostic tests, medical care, and research activities. Well trained nutritionists from Japan are providing direct services to people and their students. Nepali scientists, engineers, and planners are doing a great job through public and private sectors for infrastructure as well as socio-economic development of the country. They have served the country in different capacities such as vice chair and members of the National Planning Commission, an apex body for the overall planning of the country. Likewise, they are involved in the Provincial and city level planning commission. The Nepal Academy of Science and

Science Diplomacy:

It is high time for Nepali society to ensure rapid development for sustainable economic growth and prosperity. This is reflected in the mission of current government, "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali". But the desired economic growth of any country can't be achieved without the development of science and technology. For the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) like Nepal, getting the maximum benefits using the resources we have and strengthening science, technology and innovation is a must. Development partners, foreign universities and institutions, technical and financial support for research collaboration, capacity development, infrastructure development, and knowledge and technological transfer, will be meaningful in utilizing our resources in a more pragmatic and productive way. For example, the Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST), through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between NAST and Kyushu Institute of Technology (KYUTECH), Japan, has jointly entered into the BIRDS-3 Project. As a result of the collaboration between the institutions, Nepal was able to deploy a nano-satellite called NepaliSat-1 into space for the first time. Though it is a 1U type satellite, small in size, it is a big step for Nepal to encourage and motivate its youth interested in space

technology. In the same connection Kyutech also provided opportunities for higher degree studies in space technology for two Nepali students, who were also directly involved in the satellite project. Similarly, NAST is currently led by a Doctorate Degree holder from a Japanese university as the Vice Chancellor. He proposed to establish appropriate research centers as Centers of Excellence in each of the seven Provinces of Nepal. However, due to technical and financial constraints only one Provincial office in the Far-Western Province has been established so far. NAST is, therefore, seeking international cooperation through science diplomacy for technical and financial support to work in collaboration at different Provinces of Nepal. If we can activate bilateral or multilateral science diplomacy for garnering international support, the establishment of a research center in each Province would not be a big issue. Clearly speaking, Japan as an important development partner for Nepal can help to establish at least one Centre of Excellence. This would be a great contribution in the field of science and technology in Nepal. The planned research centers at Provincial level could help to utilize the resources available in the different Provinces for the benefit of society and pave the way to carry out sustainable development activities in the country. NAST has also envisioned to establish a Science City by developing areas around the central office of NAST, including a Science and Technology Park within its premises by integrating many scientific research and development related activities. Technical and financial issues are also important to execute this task. The realization of this project will not be a dream if science diplomacy could be properly expedited.

Conclusion:

Science does not have any border. The world has already become a global village. In this context, science diplomacy can play a vital role towards seeking the opportunities for technology transfer, scientific collaboration, science research and development, scientific capacity building, and scientific data sharing to combat global and national problems. In bilateral or multilateral international dialogues for development partnerships, emphasis is generally given to infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, buildings, or hospital construction. As a result research and innovation sectors are not seen as a priority. It is high time for a developing country like Nepal to focus on research and innovation for the solution to societal problems and sustainable development. This demands a shift in the development partner's policy to emphasize on scientific capacity building, support for research and innovation for the sustainability and proper way of harnessing resources. So, I emphasize here to promote diplomacy for science as an integral part of foreign policy to promote research, innovation and commercialization of innovative products. For strengthening science diplomacy, positions such as Scientific Advisor to the President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and Education, Science and Technology Minister are instrumental. Also, a Scientific Attaché/ Counselor needs to be deployed to each of the diplomatic missions outside the country to strengthen science diplomacy. This will provide more opportunities for Nepali scientists and technologist to be involved in diplomatic work and contribute to the country in a different way.

Let's hope that, in the days to come, science diplomacy becomes the priority of both nations to facilitate and capacitate the Nepali scientists and technologist who have studied in Japan. I am confident that through science diplomacy the cordial relation between Japan and Nepal will be strengthened even more in the days to come and attain a new height.



Minister for Education, Science and Technology of Nepal and Vice Chancellor of NAST in between two Vice Presidents of JAXA during satellite deployment program at JAXA Office, Tsukuba, Japan on 17th June 2019.



Nepal's First Nano-Satellite Nepali Sat-1 deployed in space

Heritage: The Jewels of Japan: What can Nepal Learn?

Prof. Dr. Him Lal Ghimire • Visiting Fellow of the Japan Foundation at Nanzan University, Nagoya • Email: himghimire@gmail.com

Background:

Culture and heritage is the unique property, attraction and identity of any country. Culture and heritage holds great importance for communities around the world. Heritage is the symbolic embodiment of the past, reconstructed and reinterpreted in the collective memories and traditions of contemporary societies rather than being perceived as a mere apotheosis of bygone times. Culture and heritage includes their originality, and specialty of tradition and other valuable aspects. Culture displays social traditions, activities, values, beliefs, religion and tradition, etc. Heritage and culture must be unique and authentic. Authenticity is conventionally defined as originality, genuineness or sincerity. Both Japan and Nepal are home to diverse cultures and heritage sites. Japan and Nepal's national identity tend to emphasize cultural values which often describe their people, traditions, customs and religion. It has been an interesting lesson to the rest of the world how Japanese and Nepalese cultures and traditions are different to those of other countries.



Culture and Heritage of Japan:

Japan boasts a rich and fascinating history and culture that dates back thousands of years, along with natural beauty and modernization. Boasting an endless list of top attractions, things to see and do, and points of interest to explore, a vacation in Japan is certainly a great

investment of time and money. Japan values its cultivated traditions and practices as much as it values keeping in touch with the future. Whether grounded in history or in religion, Japanese customs are still widely practiced to this day. There are many ways travelers can experience authentic Japanese culture and heritage without having to spend too much money. A visit to a shrine, temple, or castle would provide a fantastic insight into Japan's diverse history and how Japanese society has developed. Additionally, Japan holds festivals year round that symbolize various aspects of culture and tradition, which are held in very high esteem by Japanese people. Festivals in Japan are some of the most joyful and celebratory events in the country. Scattered around the country spanning centuries of design and worship, the shrines and temples of Japan are some of the finest examples of Japanese heritage and spirituality. The architecture of some of Japan's ancient structures (castles) is among the most unique and ingenious in the world. The various castles scattered across Japan each have their own stories to tell, so catching a glimpse of at least a few of these breathtaking structures makes any trip to Japan worthwhile.

Japan grew up with Wa (harmony) which is one of the important aspect of anthropology. Wa breathes the sanctity of ancient roots. It is enshrined in a "constitution" dating back to A.D. 604, attributed

to Prince ShotokuTaishi, who decreed: “Wa” should be valued and quarrels avoided. When superiors are in harmony with each other and inferiors are friendly, then affairs are discussed quietly and the right view of matters prevails.” Western culture pulls people apart, pits the strong against the weak. Japan draws people together and Wa prevails. That’s a Japanese national trait. Japan has always had a reputation for its distinctive culture and unique traditions. Japanese people take great pride in taking loving care of their surroundings so that cleanliness and organization are the special traits of Japanese people. Considering the number of people, the clean and tidy state of the streets is almost miraculous.

Japanese people are famous for their hard work, punctuality, honesty, taking ownership and being responsible citizens. Japan’s service industry sets the global standard for excellent service, and one of the best parts is they are not doing it in the hope that they will get a good tip. Most people in the service industry are courteous to a fault. Bowing is an important part of Japanese culture. The Japanese learn how and when to bow from a young age, and they use bows among themselves to mean anything from thank you to I am sorry. Travelers have a common concern while traveling in a foreign country where you do not speak the language: fear of being taken advantage of. This slightly paranoid worry often prevents travelers from asking strangers for assistance, and also has the unfortunate side effect of preventing travelers from more immersive and unscripted interactions with local people. Japanese people are extremely gracious hosts, and – famously – will often go out of their way to ensure that you have a wonderful experience during your visit. In Japan, almost everyone is out to help you. Japanese people are among the kindest and most helpful people.

Japanese cuisine is famous around the globe. Aside from favorites loved around the world, such as edamame (soybeans), sushi, and miso, there are a lot of uniquely Japanese dishes even the most adventurous foodie might need coaxing to try. The tea ceremony was introduced to Japan by Chinese monks over 1,000 years ago. But over the centuries, the Japanese tea ceremony has become such a unique and distinctive art that the two now have few similarities. Traditional fashions such as the kimono are unique to Japan and is one thing that sets it apart from other cultures. Many locals still enjoy wearing traditional clothes for special occasions, including graduations, weddings, and festivals.

Religion and culture in Japan reflects a long history during which various religious beliefs and practices - some indigenous and some “imported” from other places - have been adopted and adapted to Japanese culture. The ancient indigenous folk religion, later formalized as Shinto, was based on feelings of awe toward the sacred powers (kami) that brought life to the earth and human community. According to Nihon Shoki (the Chronicles of Japan), Buddhism was introduced to Japan in 552 AD by Korean monks. Sutras were later brought from China, temples and shrines were built and monastic communities established. More importantly, Buddhism is one of the major religions in the world. About five hundred million Buddhist people and millions of peace lovers around the globe visit holy places, following the footsteps of the Buddha as the Buddha himself enshrined pilgrimage as an important act in the life of a peace seeker. People long for peace and happiness, but in many ways they are starving. Buddhism has been a source and way forward for peace and happiness – as people now realize today. There are many Buddhist heritage sites that have been explored, excavated, conserved, developed and promoted because of tourism activities all over the world. Japanese people are highly influenced by the five precepts (pañcaśīla in Sanskrit) of Buddhism. They constitute the basic code of ethics to be undertaken by followers of Buddhism. The precepts are commitments to abstain from - killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication.

To sum up, Japan is Japan because of its unique culture, tradition and heritage.

Japan and Nepal Connection:

Japan and Nepal have long history of cooperation and connection



Figure: Shiva-Lingam in a Buddhist Temple (Toganji), Nagoya, Japan, Photo: Pavel Borodin (2001)

for the development of Nepal. An outstanding portfolio of tourism assets ranges from the Himalayas with the highest mountain, Mt. Everest, to living culture, the birthplace of Buddha, Gods and Goddesses, rich cultural and natural heritages, adventure, spirituality, regional diversity, abundance in wildlife and natural resources, arts, recreation, and entertainment. Additionally, Nepal also holds festivals year round that symbolize various aspects of culture and tradition, which are held in very high esteem by Nepalese people. Festivals in Nepal are some of the most joyful and celebratory events in the country. The unique and diverse Nepalese culture has been an attraction for the rest of the world. Nepal is also famous for warm and exceptional hospitality towards tourists. Japanese people have a great affection and love for Nepal and Nepalese culture. Once Japanese people come to visit Nepal, they fall in love with the people and culture, and come back again and again. Japanese people have high respect to the birthplace of Buddha and love to visit Lumbini. Early completion of the Gautam Buddha Airport will play a key role to attract more Japanese tourists. The direct flights of Nepal Airlines have a positive impact on Nepalese tourism. With this, travelers do not need to spend more time in transit.

Resemblances of Culture and Heritages between Japan and Nepal:

Japan and Nepal have a long history of cooperation and connection. Japan and Nepal’s national identity tend to emphasize cultural values which often describe their people, traditions, customs, and religion. Any kind of support to Nepal by Japan is highly valued for the country’s economic growth. The Nepali community is the fifth largest foreign community in Japan. Here are some resemblances between Japan and Nepal.

- Japan is an island country and Nepal as land locked country, both mountainous countries and famous for natural beauty.
- The culture and religion are very close.
- The “Licchavi Dynasty” of Nepal can be compared with the “Yamto” (593 A.D.), “Asuka”, “Hakuho”, and “Nara” (793 A.D.) eras of Japan.
- The story of Yeti in Nepal and Yuki Onna in Japan.
- Gion festival in Japan and the Kumari and Machhindranath Jatra in Nepal.
- Many Hindu gods were incorporated into Buddhism and introduced into China and then into Japan, such as Shiva, Indra, and so forth.
- Toganji, one of the Buddhist temples in Nagoya, Japan contains a Shiva-Lingam and a shrine dedicated to the Goddess Saraswati, who is honored in a Benzaiten Festival.



Figure: Gojunoto (Pagoda) temple in Japan. The author is with a foreign pilgrim at Chikurinji (Temple no 31) in Shikoku

- The pagoda style is one of the common architectures in temples of both Nepal and Japan.
- In Japan, Gojunoto (Pagoda) means the temple of five roofs. Each roof has its meaning. From the lower to the upper roof - land, water, fire, wind and space (jewel).
- Ji Chin Sai in Japan and Jag Puja in Nepal for groundbreaking.
- Tatami in Japan and sukul/mandro in Nepal.
- Itadakimasu in Japan and offering of food in Nepal before a meal.

Risk and Alternation:

Despite the growing influence of the West, there is a question of survival of authentic Japanese cultures and heritages. As a result, the rise of modernization and westernization is changing the Japanese lifestyle. Anthropology shows that a culture is passed from one generation to another while changing itself little by little. Japan can perhaps recover its lost Wa and return to its rich culture and heritage. At the core of the Japanese soul is the spirit of mutual aid; everyone helping each other as the way to happiness. Even if modernization is necessary to improve human life, it will be indispensable for Eastern nations to maintain their traditional cultures. Traditional cultures need neither to reject modernization nor to be absorbed in the streams of

modernization. These two must harmonize and complement each other. Japan's remarkable heritage is not only part of what makes Japan a popular travel destination, but also something that needs to be properly protected, maintained and preserved, so that future generations can enjoy it as much as we do today. The culture and heritage of Japan is not only the nation's pride but also a matter of interest for people around the globe. These Japanese traits should not be at risk. Time has come to think and preserve the authentic cultures, traditions and heritages in Japan. The young people have to take ownership and be responsible to preserve them. Japan has to be very optimistic about the future of heritage and culture, however, Japanese youngsters' perception on heritage and their cultural alteration affects much. Research on those issues is desperately needed.

And finally, Japan and Nepal's remarkable heritage is not only part of what makes both countries popular travel destinations, but are also something that needs to be properly protected, maintained and preserved, so that future generations can enjoy it as much as we do today. Both Japan and Nepal have to be very optimistic about the future of tourism, particularly as has a huge potential to be a top class tourist attraction. Tourists can experience, enjoy and feel the difference with diverse tourist attractions, unique cultures, history and religion in Japan and Nepal. The learning from Japan could be instrumental to develop cultural and heritage tourism in Nepal.

Discussion on Economic Impact of COVID-19 in Nepal

Bama Dev Sigdel, PhD • Ex- Executive Director, Nepal Rastra Bank • Senior Researcher, CEPRUD, Kathmandu • Email: bamaDEVsigdel@gmail.com

The illness caused by the Corona Virus was named COVID-19 by WHO, which means "Corona Virus disease 2019". The name was selected to avoid stigmatizing the virus's origins in terms of population, geography or the animal association. The first case of COVID-19 was reported in Hubei Province of China on 31st December, 2019. A Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) was declared on 30th January, 2020 and COVID-19 was declared a pandemic on 11th March, 2020.



The pandemic directly causes multiple impacts on humans by causing varying degrees of infections, which increases morbidity and mortality. With COVID-19, we saw significant changes in human behavior in order to avoid contracting or transmitting the disease. Countries of the world responded through various policy measures to contain the spread of Corona Virus. Restrictions on travel across national as well as international borders, a ban on public gatherings, and the shutting down of educational institutes and non-essential businesses were the major steps taken by almost all governments. While some countries adopted safety measures at a very early stage of the outbreak, some countries responded later.

If we go back to mid 2020, we can clearly see the increasing mortality which directly challenged the best healthcare systems in the world. After almost a year now, COVID-19 has crippled the economies of rich and poor countries alike. Yet, for many low-income and fragile states, the economic shocks will be magnified by the loss of remittance money sent home by migrants employed in foreign countries. This is likely to heighten economic, fiscal, and social pressure on governments of these countries who already are struggling to cope with the loss in economy.

South Asia witnessed retard on growth as it is directly or indirectly linked to China via trade, investment, and the tourism sphere. It is expected that South Asia's economic growth will decline up to 1.3 percent with the COVID-19 effect in the year 2020. South Asia's formal internal economy will be hit hard; denied the means of earning livelihoods. South Asian economies will face more hardship with the probable depreciation of their currencies against the US dollars; trickle down of foreign investment and less demand from abroad for goods

produced in South Asia will make an additional hardship. For the majority of South Asian countries with large numbers of overseas workers, remittances would slow down due to layoffs and delay in salary payments abroad. Lower overall domestic consumer demand will have a negative impact on production and employment. The majority of people in South Asian countries are employed in the informal sectors of the economy that provides no social security coverage. Lack of social security and poor coverage makes the workers vulnerable to economic shocks that affect their livelihood too.

Nepal's economy has become vulnerable due to COVID-19. The aim was that the Nepalese economy would grow by seven percent in 2020. Due to the pandemic's effect, this figure has been revised and it is projected that the economy will hardly grow by two percent in 2020. According to ADB/Manila's forecast, Nepal may lose a total GDP of from 1.0 percent to 2.0 percent in 2020 due to the Corona Virus. The Nepal Rastra Bank depicts an adverse impact of COVID-19 on export, import, travel and tourism, remittance inflow, private sectors' credit flows, etc., in the economy. For example, Nepal's export and import figures were NRs. 9.7 billion and NRs 122.8 billion respectively in August/ September 2019. This figure dropped to NRs 3.3 billion and NRs 42.6 billion respectively in April/ May 2020. Similarly, the travel income of Nepal also dropped to the lowest of NRs 1.2 billion in May/June 2020 from that of NRs 5.8 billion in August/ September 2019. Likewise, remittance received by Nepal dropped to NRs 34.5 billion in March/ April 2020 from that of NRs 77.9 billion in August/ September 2019. Private sectors' credit flow in the economy also dropped to NRs 13.3 billion in April/ May 2020 from that of NRs 57.3 billion in August/ September 2019. Government's revenue generation activities as well as its public expenditure programs were also adversely affected by the Corona Virus.

Recession occurred in Nepal due to the ongoing pandemic. As a result, more formal and informal sector's labor have remained unemployed. It is estimated that more than six million people are expected to be un-employed because of the pandemic effect. Nearly four in every five workers are most vulnerable to disruption, especially those who were engaged in the construction, manufacturing and trade sub-sectors of the economy. ILO estimates that between 1.6 and 2.0 million jobs

are likely to suffer in Nepal in the current crisis, either with complete job loss or reduced working hours and as well as decrease in wages. It is estimated that 4.4 million labors are engaged in the informal sector in Nepal. Among them, the majority may have lost their jobs already. The tourism sector collapsed and construction sectors were affected badly. As a result, many people engaged in such sectors are idle now. Farmers became frustrated and discouraged to produce agro-commodities. Constant lockdowns led to supply side bottlenecks. Many Nepalis working in Indian cities in low paid jobs returned home. Some four hundred thousand plus Nepali migrant labors returned from abroad having lost their job due to closure of hotels, restaurants, and shopping malls they were working in. The lockdown brought by the pandemic also affected the welfare of the poor and vulnerable segment of the population through several channels. Firstly, the most obvious is through the loss of income and jobs of working adults. Secondly, with the income cuts and job loss, the poor people were forced to sell their assets to cope with the economic shock.

Recently, most of the financial institutions are facing an excess liquidity situation as investors are not in the position to invest in the economy because of uncertainty created by Corona Virus spread throughout the country. The projects of national importance are functioning at a slow pace with a scarcity of raw materials, labors, technical experts, etc. There are ups and downs in the financial sector and stock market; investors are scared. Additionally, Nepal may face hardship to finance the programs designated by government through its planning. Especially those for poverty lessening and social sector development programs targeted for rural areas by the government. Additionally, the growing debt burden in Nepal will add more complications to its economy. Low profile of internal revenue collection will urge Nepal to eye foreign aid or soft loans from donors, which might become more severe in the years to come with the COVID-19 after affects.

Nepal Rastra Bank announced policy initiatives viewing COVID-19: provision for an injection of liquidity, lessening of bank rate provision of loans to import medical equipments and medicine, subsidized loans for stranded workers supposed to go abroad, provision of refinance for industries, liquidity support schemes etc. The Government of Nepal had also addressed the following: social security fund provision on behalf of workers, waiver of home rent for workers, employment opportunities for returnee migrant workers at the local level, assurance of insurance packages for the frontline health workers etc.

Despite continuous lockdowns and the government's investment to curb the Corona Virus pandemic through various measures, the outcome has not showed positive indications. Nepal witnessed a tremendous increment in the number of Corona affected cases among people, with an increase in the number of deaths and rapid transmission of the virus in the communities. The poor tracing mechanism with the dubious security checks were the main causes of the spread of Corona

Virus. Additionally, the reluctance on the part of the people to wear a mask, use sanitizers or wash hands with soap and the unnecessary gathering or lack of social distancing have further fueled the number of COVID-19 cases. Most of the health care institutions, especially in urban areas, in Nepal are also seen to be reluctant to show empathy and commitment to the people during the COVID crisis.

Vietnam's successful strategy of containing the Corona Virus is worth mentioning here. In Vietnam, strict measures to contain the virus were gradually adopted. This included airport health screenings, physical distancing, travel bans on foreign visits, school closures and cancellation of public events. Wearing masks at public venues was strictly enforced, even before WHO's recommendation, along with placement of hand sanitizers in public areas, work places and residential buildings. Vietnam used extensive contact tracing, isolation and quarantine strategies. Groups of people who lived near confirmed cases, sometimes an entire street or village, were swiftly tested and isolated, which helped limit community transmission. Similarly, Thailand's overall response and ability to curb infections, has led WHO to identify Thailand as a success story in dealing with the pandemic. The continued vigilance, a whole society approach and ramped-up testing made it possible for Thailand to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to see zero deaths. Similarly, South Korea's key to success in containing the spread of the Corona Virus was the public, who sacrificed their civil rights for the sake of fighting the pandemic. South Korean people wore masks daily. South Korea's effort on aggressive contact tracing and other testing programs further facilitated to downsize the infection in the country.

The Japanese model to contain COVID-19 has become exemplary for countries like Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, etc. Japan adopted a cluster based approach. This is successful in an environment in which there are only a few infected persons and clusters are detectable at an early stage to contain COVID-19. Another key to Japan's model to contain COVID-19 is the social distancing method and avoiding certain areas. Known as the three C's this refers to avoiding Closed spaces with poor ventilation, Crowded places with many people nearby and Close contact settings. Underlying Japanese model are factors such as the habit of wearing masks on a daily basis.

Mere formulation of policy guidelines by a government does not yield fruitful achievement to loosen transmission of the Corona Virus in the country or within communities. Thus, the best practices followed by Vietnam, Thailand, South Korea, Japan, etc., could be replicated by Nepal so as to contain or lessen the effects of COVID-19. This will somehow upgrade the level of slacked economy onto a recovery path. Transparency of work to contain Corona transmission on the part of government and better cooperation from Nepalese people and concerned stakeholders will further facilitate to contain the Corona Virus pandemic in the months to come.

Japanese Karaoke Competition in Kathmandu

The 13th Japanese Language Karaoke Competition wrapped up in Kathmandu through an online forum and even the difficulty of COVID-19 pandemic, 11 participants competed to the competition. The results of competition were published online through Facebook and YouTube channels on 26th December. The competition was held online due to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, however the contestants competed by their great voices by singing their preferred Japanese songs passionately. At the contest, Ms. Ramita Shahi from the Japanese Language & Education and Culture Centre (JLECC) sang a song called "Taisetsunaanata" by Matsuda Seiko, and won the best award. The competition is available by JALTAN Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/jaltan.org>) and Embassy Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/JPNInNepal/>).

The competition was jointly organized by the Embassy of Japan and the Japanese Language Teachers' Association, Nepal (JALTAN). The annual Japanese language Karaoke competition is aimed to introduce Japanese culture and language to Nepali people and attracts large numbers of Japanese language students every year. This competition was jointly supported by the Japanese Association in Nepal, the Japanese Universities Alumni Association, Nepal (JUAAN), Japan Foundation and the JICA Alumni Association of Nepal (JAAN).

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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