

Corona and its effects on the Himalayan country Nepal.

As the disaster of 21st century Corona virus originated from China; a neighbouring country of Nepal, our beautiful Himalayan state could not remain untouched. The first case of Covid-19 was seen in Nepal on 23 January, 2020, almost a month after the disease's incidence in China. At that time the disease was not declared a pandemic but its cases were spreading slowly over Europe and North America. This first case landed in Nepal from China. The case was mildly symptomatic and was discharged within two weeks after full recovery. The second was seen a month after the first case and then the frequency of positive cases rose over the period. However, the scenario for other countries was getting chaotic with dramatic increase in COVID-19 counts, as well as deaths.

Nepal is a landlocked country which shares its southern boarder with India and China at the north. Nepal was declared one of the vulnerable countries for Corona epidemic by WHO, considering the poor health system of the country and fairly relaxed border with both neighbouring countries. Nepal was declared lockdown on 24 March. Cases were expected to rise and people were horrified after seeing the situation of developed countries like China, Italy, Spain and the USA.

Fortunately, the condition of Nepal is not as dire as expected, even 3-4 weeks after lockdown. Till date, there are 75 cases, each with mild symptoms. The cases are scattered over the eastern and central region mostly and some in the western region, as well. The greatest achievement so far has been the zero deaths with no ICU admission till date. Cases are recovering and none of the patients have shown severe symptoms. Even the members of the family with positive cases are tasted negative without being in self isolation. It's very strange to find this picture amidst the skyrocketing count of cases and death in our neighbouring country despite open borders.

Amidst this, the Nepalese have their own belief. Some think, Nepal has always been protected by the presence of the holy shrine of Lord Pashupatinath, while others believe that the polluted environment around them along with contaminated food and water have made their immune system strong against this virus.

After the announcement of lockdown, all the schools, colleges and universities were closed and postponed their scheduled exams, also. Similarly, all the hotels, bars, restaurants, shops and public places as well as means of transportation were banned to run. Police and security personnel were deployed in the streets and people were not permitted to walk or meet in a group. They were to cover their face with masks and were asked to wash their hands with soap and water. Also, they were asked to use sanitizers. People are seen in the taps and grocery stores only during the assigned time. All are staying inside their homes. Then, many schools were converted into quarantine camps. Even our school was converted into a temporary hospital for isolation patients.

Till now factories, industries, transportation and above mentioned public places are all fully closed.

There are two methods in use for identifying the infected people: We are using both PCR and RDT technique. Till now 13,640 people have been tested through PCR and 50,845 people have been tested through RDT. There are 87 people in isolation and 22,903 people in quarantine until now, whereas 16 infected and now recovered people have returned home from treatment. Luckily, there has been no death until now.

We hope, these worse days will be over soon and we are supporting the government and ourselves by continuing staying at home.

Lockdown is still on till 7th of May. Then, the government will decide whether to extend or open the lockdown.

Experts and economists have made analyses which show that there are tremendous impacts of Covid-19 on the Nepalese economy, as Nepal is fully dependent on other countries and imports. The economic and social isolation costs will increase. Nepal is substantially dependent on remittance flow.

So, economical impacts will be seen not only at this very moment but also for at least the next five years, as millions of people have become jobless abroad as well as inside the country during the lockdown. Malaysia, South Korea, the Middle East, the Gulf countries and India are the top destination for Nepalese workers. With the outbreak of Corona virus globally, Nepalese workers have lost their job and are not able to send money home, which is directly affecting their families and day to day livelihood. The family members, who directly rely on their head of the family, now have big problem to buy food and other daily needs. Since hotels, restaurants, industries and manufacturing companies are closed within the country, employees and daily wages workers are severely affected, for example, they have no money to buy their meal. At present, it is a deeply moving scene, as some food and relief given and distributed by the government is not enough.

The labour market and education system have also been affected. Unemployment will increase in tourism-related industries in the days to come. Only calculating the impacts on tourist's stays and trips, hotels decline in retail trade, declines in remittance, the closedown of education centres and so on are not enough to get the true picture of impacts on the economy in Nepal.

Janak K.C.

-Principal of Old Capital Higher Secondary School, Gorkha

-Project leader of Direkthilfe Nepal e.V.

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