

The Voice Of Madhesh

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मधेशवाणी
The Voice of Madhesh

Kathmandu / Vol.-10/ Issue - 46, Monday, 16 March, 2020 (3 Chaitra, 2076) Page- 8,

Indian PM Modi offers Emergency Fund with US\$ 10 million Nepal will also join soon in this fund: PM Oli

Kathmandu: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has proposed the SAARC member states to establish an Emergency Fund to tackle the possible outbreak of Covid-19. Speaking at the SAARC video-conference on discussing the threat of pandemic Prime Minister Modi offered to establish a COVID-19 emergency fund, based on voluntary contribution from all of us. "India offers 10 Million USD for the fund and any member state can use the fund to meet the cost during immediate action to fight the deadly virus." He also shared that the foreign secretary of India will further initiate and coordinate to establish such a fund. PM Modi opined to



'PM Modi's offer to establish SAARC Emergency Medical Center, supported by strong funding mechanism would be desirable.'

keep the teams of experts and doctors alert to depute in the risky zones at any time. PM Modi also proposed to assemble a rapid response team of doctors and required equipment

at regional level, along with online training programmes for emergency response team to raise their competencies. "The integrated disease surveillance portals could

also be shared," said PM Modi. "Let us use the existing facilities like SAARC disaster management centers and common research platforms to coordinate in controlling epidemics." PM Modi also stressed on calling the experts to brainstorm on long-term consequences of COVID-19 about how the misfortunes in economy could be revived during the aftermath. "This is not the first and not the last pandemic that will affect us," said PM Modi. Responding to PM Modi's offer, PM KP Sharma Oli said, "PM Modi's offer to establish SAARC Emergency Medical Center, supported by strong funding mechanism would be desirable."

"Modi's proposal is welcomed and Nepal will also join soon in this fund," said PM Oli. "We have taken several measures to enhance our preparedness. Our efforts at the moment are geared towards preventing this disease to enter into our country," said the prime minister while addressing a video conference of SAARC leaders to chalk out a joint strategy to fight the virus. Nepal has reported only one imported case of COVID-19 so far, the virus has infected 152,142 people in 141 countries and killed 5,720. "I am personally overseeing and guiding government efforts. Multi-agency coordination committees have been

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India to open only four borders with Nepal for movement

Kathmandu: Stepping up measures to control the spread of coronavirus, India has shut down all the immigration check posts except four with Nepal. According to press release, except those all types of passengers movement from immigration land check posts located at Indo-Bangladesh, Indo Bhutan, Indo Nepal and Indo-Mynamar will be suspended with effect from March 15 till further notice. Excepts



Immigration check posts in Banbasa of Uttarakhand, Sunauli in Uttar Pradesh, Raxual in Bihar and Raniganj of West Bengal, all other

posts will be shut down till further notice. However, Nepal is requesting two open two more check posts Rupedia in Nepalgunj and Jogbani in Biratnagar

According to Indian officials, Nepalese and Bhutanese do not require visa, this will not affect movement

at airports, Malik said. Government of India on Friday announced the closure of all immigration check

**Banbasa of Uttarakhand
Sunauli in Uttar Pradesh
Raxual in Bihar
Raniganj of West Bengal,**

of citizens of both the countries. Visa-free entry for Nepalese and Bhutanese citizens will continue, though medical screening at check posts will be of the same standards as

posts with four neighboring countries. As per the decision, cross-border passenger bus and train services to Bangladesh will be suspended from March

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Editorial

COVID-19 awareness

Over the last couple of months, the fear of the possible outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has caused even people in Nepal.

As the COVID-19 has kept spreading to more than 100 nations worldwide, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared it as pandemic. The virus has posed serious threats to the global economy. Much about it still remains unknown to people. The virus has posed serious threats to the global economy. Much about it still remains unknown to people. The coronavirus is spreading around the world beyond WHO's initial expectations and governments and health systems need to start preparing. But while the world is fighting against the virus, a more malicious disease is spreading under the radar and affecting millions of people around the world and that is misinformation.

Misinformation about Corona has proved much deadlier than the disease itself – spreading farther and faster and causing much more damage. There has been a rise in racist incidents all over the world against

The world is fighting against the virus, a more malicious disease is spreading under the radar and affecting millions of people around the world and that is misinformation.

Chinese and Asians in general because people think (or rather have been told) that all Chinese are infected with the disease, whether they have been in China or are displaying any symptoms or not.

People are also going crazy over supposed cures. Some of these false cures are harmless like drinking lemonade or taking Vitamin C supplements, chewing ginger or garlic or adding basil or turmeric to food. These are healthy practices and can boost the immune system, just not against this particular disease. But other information out there aren't as innocuous. Practices like drinking bleach, intake of an unhealthy amount alcohol, snorting cocaine and excessive masturbation are being promoted as preventative measures for the coronavirus.

Normally, people would be able to differentiate between facts and exaggerations or at least seek a second opinion. But, as mentioned above, times are desperate and people just want to keep themselves and their families safe. And this is how they become victims to misinformation, long before the virus ever affects them, if at all.

So, what can governments and societies do to curb the spread of such falsities? Well, very little. Social media is a free and open space that can't really be effectively monitored and censored, especially during the times of crises when the state's resources are concentrated on other matters. Conducting awareness programmes also wouldn't work because the problem is not that people are unaware, it's that people are desperate. Desperation trumps awareness in societies. So, all that can be done is that the government disseminate proper, verified information to the people through as many platforms as it can. The governments' voice needs to be loud enough to drown out the misinformation.

China faces brewing discontent among academics too

The discontent is also spreading to China's academic circles who have started questioning the increasingly restrictive ideological controls.

The simmering dissatisfaction in China is slowly but steadily becoming visible. China is confronted with many issues including economic slowdown, unemployment, rising cost of living, allegations of human rights violations in Xinjiang, overcapacity in production units, trade tariff issues with USA, accumulation of household credit etc., The assertive and rigid foreign policy being adopted by Xi Jinping has added more complications to the simmering discontent inside China. The discontent is also spreading to China's academic circles who have started questioning the increasingly restrictive ideological controls. In the effort to control academicians China has mobilised 'student spies' to have updates on political views including by teachers not palatable to communist narrative.

Several professors and teachers have been dismissed or disciplined for raising their voice not conforming to the party line. Liang Xin, a teacher in top secondary school was demoted last year following a report by a student. A mathematics teacher of Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture in April, 2019 was penalised as she unfavourably compared her student with hard working Japanese students. During June, a teacher of Beijing Secondary School was dismissed for discussing the Tiananmen Square crackdown in class room. In October, Prof Lao Dongyan of Tsinghua University, a reputed academic risking punitive action, posted a strongly worded article. She protested against increasing controls in her Wechat account, highlighting concerns about facial recognition technology. Incidentally, she was one of the 300 faculty / students at Tsinghua who signed a letter in support of Prof Xu Zhangrun of Tsinghua University leading to her suspension in July, 2019. Xu Zhangrun had been criticising the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and warning against the return of totalitarianism. Lao Dongyan raised questions against use of facial recognition in Beijing

subway and forcing people for facial recognition inspection at airports and hotels. She also raised doubt whether in a few years, genes or fingerprint recognition would be implemented. In her recommendation, she called for review by National People's Congress Standing Committee on basic legitimacy of Beijing Metro's use of facial recognition and considering initiation of necessary legislation. In December 2019, Prof Zhao Siyuan, Deputy Dean of Arts School at Communication University, Zhejiang was severely reprimanded for using terms not liked by the regime while addressing the new students.

On August 1, 2019 Prof. Sun Wenguang, a retired Professor of Economics was giving live phone interview to the Voice of America show titled 'Issues and Opinions' from his home in Jinan, Shandong Province. He was talking about his open letter criticising Chinese foreign aid and military intervention when Chinese domestic poverty was on the rise. In the middle of interview, police broke down the apartment door and arrested him. In Fudan University, Shanghai students protested against removal of charter on 'freedom of thought' and replaced with charter to strengthen CCP's leadership. On December 18 last year, students sang school anthem echoing 'independent thinking'. The hashtag discussing the change in charter was viewed by about 1.7 million on Weibo before being censored by the leadership. The same day Lu Xiaoping, Vice President of Literature School, Nanjing University posted a comment saying that if we do not speak out against blatant challenge to academic ethics now, we will never have the chance in future. However, the post was quickly deleted. A research centre affiliated with Guangzhou based official Southern Metropolis Daily conducted a survey on facial recognition. The survey revealed that 57% were worried about recording of personal whereabouts, 50% were concerned about criminals faking information for fraud, 84% wanted a channel for viewing or deleting facial data. However, 60-70% respondents believed on safety of public places with facial recognition system. A

BBC Chinese language report on December 6 based on above survey reflected dissatisfaction with state surveillance. Others have reservation mainly due to risk of leak on wealth illegally accumulated abroad by Chinese investors. The recent leak of Uyghur detention to New York Times may be the reason for the fear. Though the growing dissatisfaction may have weakened Xi Jinping's position, it is yet to undermine his authority. However these challenges have the potential to be exploited for Xi Jinping opposition. The challenges China is facing on economic front are likely to impact other areas including strategic geo-economic Belt and Road Initiative as it has seen deep slide in investments and China's defence build up. China is believed to be engaged in discussions with military establishment on the possibility of slowing down the rapid pace of ship building. The increasing price of pork may spike negative sentiments especially in view of Chinese New Year.

The discontentment with China has been amply demonstrated in Hong Kong and Taiwan too. The January 11 overwhelming election win by independence leaning Democratic Progressive Party in Taiwan in spite of best of efforts by China has made reunification agenda a more distant dream. The situation in Hong Kong indicates gathering popular support even after nine months with 1.3 million people joining the protests in the first week of New Year 2020. The protest poses increasing challenge to the legitimacy of Chinese Communist Party. In the recent elections, sweeping results in favour of anti-Hong Kong Administration have added more trouble to Chinese handling of the protests in Hong Kong. Xi Jinping certainly faces troubled times in the 'Year of Rat' beginning from January 25.

Without Congress, issues of Madhesh cannot be addressed

➤ **Why is Nepali Congress more involved in internal issues than national issues?**

• The Nepali Congress is now at the eve of 14th General Convention. The calendar of the convention has also been made public. According to that calendar, there are some procedures that Congress must take immediately. According to the new federal statute of the party, internal adjustment must be completed immediately. Therefore, the Nepali Congress is preparing for the convention rather than internal strife. Recently, the party President has formed various committees and departments. He appointed some members. Therefore, the present requirement is to reorganize the party. There is the need a competition in the General Convention, it is not a necessity now to indulge in party fights.

➤ **There are so many internal disputes in the eve of the General Convention. How does it believe the General Convention will be held on time?**

• The General Convention is most important the party. Therefore, it is our belief that there should be a convention on the specified date. There is no internal dispute within the Nepali Congress but there is competition among the leaders for General Convention.

➤ **There were differences of the Ram Chandra Paudel faction while nominating in the various departments of the Congress?**

• An attempt is being made to reconcile the differences with Ram Chandra Paudel. It is the responsibility of party President of how to handle Paudel and brings him into confidence.

➤ **Due to the internal conflict, Congress is failed to play effective role of the main opposition?**

• The Congress has not taken away other issues by engaging in internal disputes. We are playing a strong role in Parliament as well. Congress is playing its role within the House and the organization as well. Congress should also take up the program against the anti-people activities of the government.

➤ **Hasn't Congress weakened due to the internal dispute?**

• The Congress has not weakened due to internal disputes. The party is now involved in its General Convention. The controversy of the party is not a big deal and it comes at every party during the convention. Everyone should pay attention to what should be done in a timely manner.

➤ **A message has been speared that Congress is finishing**

The upcoming general convention only could determine the leadership of the party. The government has failed in every front. Terai-Madhesh is the land of democracy and the land of the Congress.

due to its internal disputes?

• One should not think that Congress is about to finish due to internal disputes. Each time the general convention comes, it seems a conflict. When the convention determines leadership, then all disputes will be settled. It has to be taken as a competition. Each time a convention comes and there seems to be a dispute like this. When the convention determines leadership, then all disputes are

settled.

➤ **There has been alleged that President Sher Bahadur Deuba wanted to extend his term?**

• It is also heard that party President Sher Bahadur Deuba tried to extend his term, but that is a myth. The President is moving forward to hold General Convention. Deuba has emphasized on adjustment and strengthening of the organization in preparation for the convention.

➤ **What kind of leadership is needed for Congress?**

• We don't have to advocate exactly who comes for the leadership of Congress. It is almost a year and half remain to hold the general convention. We have the calendar to start of the convention from the lower body. So the upcoming general convention only could determine the leadership of the party. It's not fair

to comment about it from now on. Congress is the democratic force and such kind of dispute is common in the party. Therefore, it is not correct to say that the Congress will split as soon as the dispute arises.

➤ **What are the main agendas of the 14th general convention?**

• The agendas of 14th general convention have not yet been fixed. It is yet to be determined. The party is for to resolve the problems that are



Dr. Dila Sangraula

Lawmaker, Nepali Congress

currently occurring internally. We are preparing to make the general convention success. At this time, the central committee will decide whether the Congress should carry out the strategy.

➤ **Why, the shadow government of Congress is even in the shadows itself?**

• The communist government is now in shadow. Not a single thing the government can do is make the public feel. Since the government could not do what the people want, Congress had formed a shadow government. As the leader of the government is ill, the country has become ill too. Two years of government has been completed but nothing has been achieved. The government could not work in some areas including prosperity, development, good governance, basic needs of the people. The government is unable to address the basic needs of the people. The government has failed in every front.

➤ **It means the government has not done anything in two years?**

• I have not seen any achievement of the government in two years as a representative of the people than a leader of opposition party. Even leaders and cadres of the ruling party have also criticized the activities of government. The government has not done a good job, in fact.

➤ **How do you see the relationship with neighboring countries?**

• We have adopted non-aligned foreign policy. Kalapani, Lipulek, Limpiadhura are the land of Nepal and Indian Army has encroached them. Nepal's soil, Nepal's land and Nepal's independence have been lost but the government has done nothing. We need to move forward with a clear policy in the midst of a powerful nation like China and India. Our foreign policy is now unbalanced.

➤ **Why Congress is not clear about Terai-Madhesh?**

• Terai-Madhesh is the land of democracy and the land of the Congress. So, the view of Congress on Madhes is very clear today. Without Congress, the issue of Madhes cannot be addressed.

Indian PM Modi...

set up at the center, provinces and local levels to mobilize government efforts in a synergetic manner," Oli explained.

Nepal suspended visa-on-arrival to all foreign nationals and NRN cardholders, and restricted movement of third-country nationals via land routes effective from March 14 to April 30 in a bid to prevent the virus, while foreigners with a prior valid visa will be required to submit a swab test PCR health certificate issued maximum seven days before their arrival date to Nepal. The government also postponed the labor approval until further notice.

"We have restricted international movements. Visa-on-arrival facility for all foreigners and Non-resident Nepalis with foreign passports has been suspended. Movement of third-country nationals via land routes has been suspended. Swab test PCR health certificate is made mandatory to obtain a visa from

Nepali missions abroad for essential travels to Nepal," he said. "We have suspended the issuance of work permits for Nepali nationals for overseas employment."

Likewise, the government has made it mandatory to self/home quarantine oneself for a period of 14 days if one (with diplomatic, official, business, study and working visa) should enter Nepal. "International passengers are required to go through the screening process at the health desk at the international airport. There are provisions for self-quarantine for certain categories of travelers. We are strengthening quarantine facilities in all provinces. Hospitals have arranged isolation wards and intensive wards for treatment," he said. Likewise, the government also suspended the permits (issued and to be issued) for mountaineering expeditions for the spring 2020 season.

"We are enhancing the capacity of hospitals. Health workers are being provided with personal protective equipment and the necessary incentives to motivate them.

"All the permits for mountaineering expeditions for Spring 2020 have been suspended and all major international conferences have been postponed," he added. Oli also called for a collective fight against the spread of the virus through awareness while urging the SAARC members to help each other in urgent need.

"Our region is at high risk of COVID-19. The epidemic knows no boundary, no nationality, and no region; therefore, we need to devise ways to combat this pandemic collectively. It is a common challenge; and it demands common efforts. "First thing is awareness creation. Community-based organizations and medical and non-medical volunteers could be mobilized in

raising awareness and supporting Government agencies," he said.

"We have to appeal to our people to avoid non-essential foreign travels and to avoid attending mass-gatherings and other large scale events." "Our way of greetings people with Namaste, rather than shaking hands, can avoid the potential threat of human-to-human transmission of the virus."

"I believe that our region holds a good stock of emergency medical supplies, well-trained medical professionals and laboratory facilities. These could be deployed at the call from any Member State of SAARC in urgent need." "The hospitals in the bordering areas could also be utilized for the screening as well as treating infected patients if coming from across the borders." "We need to ensure a smooth supply of essential medicine, equipment and sanitary materials in the region."

India to open...

15 to April 15, though freight train services will continue.

The government will allow international passenger traffic only through 19 of the 37 land immigration check posts, and the rest will be closed from midnight on Saturday said Anil Malik. This measure is aimed at facilitating the better screening of people entering India through check posts. The citizens of both the countries need to carry identity cards while crossing the borders.

India to set up health desks on border

Birgunj: The Indian government has decided to set up health desks at 15 different places along the border adjoining Bara and Parsa districts to prevent the coronavirus.

A meeting of stakeholders in Raxaul's Haraiya took a decision towards this effect. As per preparation, anyone entering India from Nepal will be tested at the health desks and, if tested positive for the virus, will be placed in quarantine at Duncan Hospital in Raxaul.

Lawmakers urge to pass Citizenship Amendment Bill



Kathmandu: RJP-Nepal lawmaker Mahendra Raya Yadav and NCP lawmaker Indu Kumari Sharma have urged the House of Representatives to

pass the Nepal Citizenship (Amendment) Bill immediately. The bill has been stuck at the State Affairs and Good

Governance Committee of the HoR.

Yadav said children of citizens by birth were facing livelihood problems due to non-enactment of new citizenship law. He said the government was trying to delay enactment of citizenship law to deprive citizens from their rights. "This session of the Parliament must pass the bill," he said.

NCP lawmaker Sharma said if all-party consensus could not be reached at the HoR panel the bill should be presented to the full House, which should take a call on the citizenship issues immediately. She said non-enactment of citizenship laws rendered many citizens stateless.

Nepali Ekata Samaj congratulates Ladakhi people for Special Status

Kathmandu: The Nepali Ekata Samaj, India has congratulated Ladakhi people on attaining a Special Status granted by the Government of India.

Issuing a press note, the Samaj congratulated the Ladakhi people expressing hope that Ladakh would remain as good and safe place as before for the Nepali

people working here.

In August 2019, the Parliament of India had passed an act by which Ladakh became a union territory on 31 October, 2019.

Nepalis can travel to India without any restriction

Kathmandu: India's revised travel advisory and visa restrictions related to COVID-19 will not affect the Nepalese movement to India by any means, the Indian mission in Nepal said.

India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare 'revised travel advisory' and 'visa restrictions related to COVID-19' announced by India had raised concerns about the movement of Nepali nationals to India as Nepal has been dominantly relying on its southern neighbour for materials of daily consumption as well as employment.

In a statement released late on Thursday, the Indian mission in Nepal said, "The current measures are solely for the



purposes of managing public health and safety. These measures do not currently have any impact on normal travel of Nepalese nationals to India, either by air or by existing land

routes. Existing travel arrangements for Nepalese nationals will, in other words, remain unaffected."

"However, there will be intensified health inspections at

all entry points and any traveller, Indian, Nepalese or from third countries presenting COVID-19 symptoms or with recent travel history to one of seven COVID-19 outbreak countries may possibly be subject to quarantine if so required," the release further said. Keeping in view the ramifications of the current global spread of coronavirus on public health and safety, New Delhi inducted health safety measures for foreign and Indian nationals entering into and exiting from India. The measures included halt in visa issuance for tourists and non-diplomatic staffs as set criteria to mitigate the further spread of coronavirus in the country.

Dhakal meets Delhi CM Kejriwal



Kathmandu: Chairperson of Nepal Pariwar Dal Eknath Dhakal held separate meetings with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) General Secretary Ram Madhav and Chief Minister of New Delhi Arvind Kejriwal. During their meeting, Dhakal and BJP leader Madhav discussed about the various aspects of Nepal-India bilateral relationship and South Asia region. On the occasion, Dhakal said that Nepal's relationship with the southern neighbor is incomparable. He also urged Madhav to continue support to Nepal's economic endeavors. In response, Madhav reiterated India's support to Nepal, according

to Pariwar Dal spokesperson Santosh Poudel.

Meanwhile, Dhakal congratulated Kejriwal on his election as the chief minister of New Delhi. According to spokesperson Poudel, the duo held talks on further enhancing bilateral ties between Nepal and India. "The model of development and good governance adopted by Kejriwal in New Delhi is commendable. It is exemplary for many," Dhakal told Kejriwal. Dhakal extended invitation to Bejriwal to visit Nepal at his convenience. CM Kejriwal said that Nepal is India's closest neighbor. "I will visit Nepal at an appropriate time," he told Dhakal.

India's travel ban not to affect Nepalis visiting India



Kathmandu: The Indian government's move to suspend visas of several countries will not affect Nepali people visiting India.

It has been said that healthy Nepalis can visit India without restrictions but those with infected with the coronavirus will be restricted from the border itself and sent back home. India-bound foreigners will have to undergo a screening test and those who test positive for the novel virus will be sent back home.

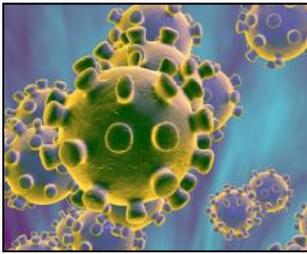
With the coronavirus gaining ground across the globe, the Indian government has suspended all visas, except for a few categories such as employment and diplomatic till

April 15 to prevent the spread of coronavirus. According to health officials, the number of confirmed cases has already reached 60.

Meanwhile, travelers have been requested to undergo 'self-imposed quarantine' for a period of 14 days from the date of their arrival.

The decision to suspend visas was taken by a group of ministers in New Delhi held under the chairmanship of Health Minister Harsh Vardhan. According to the decision, all existing visas, except for diplomatic, official, UN/International organizations, employment and project visas, will stand suspended till April 15 2020.

Corona outbreak: Nepal suspends visa on-arrival for all foreign nationals



Kathmandu: Nepal government has announced suspension of the visa on-arrival for all foreign nationals to be effective from tomorrow as a precautionary measure to prevent possible spread of coronavirus.

Issuing a fresh travel restriction, the Department of Immigration said that the on-arrival visa suspension

for all foreign nationals will remain valid until April 30. Minister for Finance Dr Yubraj Khatiwada, also the government Spokesperson, informed that the government would soon finalize the list of COVID-19-affected countries in the European Union and the Middle East. The government has yet to decide to suspend international flights as of now.

It should be noted that government had earlier this week decided to suspend on-arrival visa for the nationals of eight countries, including China, Iran, France, Germany, Spain, South Korea and Japan.

Sanjay Sah sentenced for 5 years in money laundering case

Kathmandu: Former Minister of State Sanjay Kumar Sah, who has been convicted of money laundering, was sentenced for five years by the Special Court.

Sah was also held guilty in the Janakpur bomb blast case by Dhanusha District Court and is in jail. Assistant Spokesperson for the Special Court Indra Khadka said the court also decided to slap a fine of Rs 28.4 crore on Sah for laundering Rs 14.2 crore. The Special Court also imposed two years and six months jail term on five other defendants — Sanjay's wife Rangila Devi Sah, his father Sadhu



Sah, Om Prakash Yadav, Ram Milan Raut Kurmi and Sujit Kumar Pandey. Sanjay's brother Ram Kumar Sah was sentenced to one year and eight months.

Construction of Mechi-Mahakali electric railway likely to resume



Rautahat: Halted for about four months, construction of Mechi-Mahakali Electric Railway Project in Rautahat is all set to resume following a deal with the agitating locals, who were protesting against the 'nominal compensation' proposed for their land to be appropriated for the project.

As per the agreement reached between the representatives of the railway project affected area and Rautahat administration here today, in the presence of member of the Federal Parliament Dev Prasad Timalsina and Nepal Communist Party (NCP) district in-charge Yuvraj Bhattarai, construction of the railway project will resume

by following the compensation rate fixed on March 6.

Construction of Bardibas-Nijgadh section of the railway project had been held up for about four months after the locals of Betauna in Chandrapur Municipality, Rautahat, halted the work, dissatisfied with the compensation amount fixed for their land.

Though there had been a re-evaluation of the compensation amount lately, the locals had refused to end their protest seeking for yet another re-evaluation. As per the latest evaluation, land, divided in four categories, would get from Rs four to 11 lakh per kattha.

Indian envoy Kwatra calls on Speaker Sapkota



Kathmandu: Indian Ambassador to Nepal Vinay Mohan Kwatra called on speaker of the House of Representatives Agni Prasad Sapkota at the latter's office. During the meeting, the various matters of bilateral ties were discussed, according to the speaker's secretariat. Press advisor to the speaker Shreedhar Neupane told reporters that the duo held talks on further enhancing multifaceted bilateral ties between the two

countries. Speaker Sapkota lauded India's ongoing support to Nepal's post-earthquake reconstruction and battling the coronavirus epidemic.

On the occasion, the duo discussed about further promoting ties between the Nepali and Indian parliaments. This is the first meeting between Kwatra and Sapkota since the former arrived in Nepal to take up his new diplomatic assignment last week.

Owners of land captured for railway desperately waiting for compensation

Mahottari: The owners of land given for the purpose of Bardibas-Jaynagar rail service project have complained with the Minister why they were not provided compensation.

As Minister for Physical Infrastructures and Transport, Basanta Nembang, arrived to inspect the railway activities, the locals showed severe concern over government's sheer negligence to determine compensation though the land was banned for use for five years.

"The Rail Department has banned us from using and transacting our lands for the proposal railway. But we did not get any compensation at all," Khadga Bahadur Singh, a resident from Bardibas-14, shared before the Minister Nembang. He urged the Minister to determine the land's value and provide compensation.

Another Gopi Pokhrel viewed, "The price of land is skyrocketing every year. Why didn't the Rail Department pay heed to distribute compensation?"



The Minister assured the locals that compensation would be provided soon after determining the lands' value. The government had been claiming that the railway to be constructed with the economic and technological support since 2014 would complete in 2020. But no activities have been forwarded as per the timeschedule which has further despaired the people here.

Minister Nembang who had been here to inspect the work progress on the Bardibas-Jayanagar rail service and East-West rail service said

preparatory works in regard with the determination and distribution of compensation for the third section, construction works in the section and the service operation along the first section would begin. As he said, the service will come into operation on the first section (Kurtha-Jayanagar) within the current fiscal year.

Meanwhile, Compensation Assessment Committee, Mahottari's chair and Mahottari Chief District Officer, Surya Bahadur Khatri assured the issue of fixing compensation of 52 biga of land in Bardibas-14 find a conclusion within a few weeks. Similarly, the compensation issue of land towards Mithila

municipality in Dhanusha would be finalised soon, said the District Administration Office, Dhanusha.

Among the 69 kilometers railway track from Jayanagar, India to Bardibas of Mahottari, 69 kilometers lies towards Mahottari, 36 kilometers is towards Dhanusha and around two kilometers lies towards India. "The remaining works of the fixation and distribution of compensation would end soon," said Department of Railways Director General Balaram Mishra who was accompanying the minister on the occasion. He also admitted that in the past works could not take place as per the schedule.

Works of expanding the broad-gauge railway had begun in 2014 with the financial assistance of Rs 7.2 billion of the Indian Government. The 51-kilometer Bijalpura-Bhangaha-Mahottari-Janakpur-Dhanusha-Jayanagar railway service had begun in 1994 and it was shrunk to 29 kilometers after it was hit by the floods in 2058 BS. With the commencement of works to upgrade the railway, the service has remained completely closed.

Province 2 deserves 'special economic package'



Kathmandu: NCP lawmaker Prabhu Shah has registered a proposal of public importance at the Secretariat of the Federal Parliament today, demanding Special Economic Package for Province 2 as a means of ensuring justice mainstreaming the otherwise 'marginalized' region.

NCP lawmaker Prabhu Shah, who is also proposed lead NCP as party Chair of Province 2,

registered the proposal with NCP lawmaker Amaresh Kumar Singh, RJP lawmaker Laxman Lal Karna and Samajbadi Party MP Uma Shanker Argariya as the supporter of the proposal. The proposal has cited the disparity, inequality, economic backwardness, illiteracy as the indicator which shows the primitiveness of the area making it urgent for the state to address the issue.

Parliament removes agenda of resolution proposal on Kalapani



Kathmandu: A resolution proposal to remove Indian troops from the Nepal-India border Kalapani and return the encroached land has been excluded from the agenda of the meeting of the House of Representatives.

Earlier, the issue of Kalapani had

featured in the agenda of the meeting of the parliament. It is learnt that ruling party lawmaker Khagaraj Adhikari would be the proposer of the resolution proposal and that it would be seconded by another lawmaker Ram Kumari Jhankri.

Five border entry points with India shut



Baitadi: Five entry checkpoints at the Indian border in Baitadi here have been shut to ward off COVID-19 pandemic.

The checkpoints at Pancheswor, Shivanath rural municipality and Dasharathchand municipality have been closed down keeping in mind the sensitivity of possible outbreak of coronavirus.

Chief of Baitadi District Coordination Committee Siddharaj Bhatta stated that the river banks which are being traveled through boats have been shut down for the time

being. The entry points have been closed at Balara, Dharam, Dhoya, Kusmat and Khairanighat.

The movement to and from the transit points has been restricted to keep precautions of the virus outbreak, said health office in-charge Yogesh Prasad Bhatta. Meanwhile, preparation is underway to set up health desks at four border checkpoints in the district.

The desk, however, has been in place at main checkpoint Jhulaghat since 22 February.

Alcohol takes life in Dhanusha



Janakpur; The number of people succumbing to the intake of toxic alcohol at Ramadaiya of Kshireswornath municipality in Dhanusha has reached 15. They had taken ill after consuming locally made liquor excessively in course of celebrating the Holi festival a few days ago, the District Police Office said.

Those passing away today are Banarasi Devi Sada, Mithila Sada and Jgaharu Sada. Till Friday, the death toll had

reached 12. Five others taken ill after consuming toxic alcohol are undergoing treatment.

Area Police Office Mahendranagar's police inspector Pappu Nayak said the investigation into the matter has begun. The entire village is in grief due to the unexpected deaths of locals. The dead are from poor economic class, it is said. Meanwhile, police have arrested seven persons for an investigation into the incident.

India suspends all tourist visas till April 15



New Delhi: India on March 11 suspended all tourist visas till April 15 in a bid to contain spread of the novel coronavirus, according to an official statement.

The suspension will come into effect from 12 p.m. GMT (5.30 p.m. IST) on March 13 at the port of departure. The decision was taken at the meeting of Group of Ministers held in New Delhi under the chairmanship of Health Minister Harsh Vardhan.

"All existing visas, except

diplomatic, official, UN/International organisations, employment and project visas stand suspended till 15th April 2020. This will come into effect from 1200 GMT on 13th March 2020 at the port of departure," the statement said. Visa-free travel facility granted to OCI card holders is also kept in abeyance till April 15.

Any foreign national who intends to travel to India for compelling reason may contact the nearest Indian Mission, the release said, adding that all incoming travellers, including Indian nationals, arriving from or having visited China, Italy, Iran, Republic of Korea, France, Spain and Germany after February 15 will be quarantined for a minimum period of 14 days.

60 Nepalis quarantined in Katra, India

Bara: Following the outbreak of pandemic COVID-19, around sixty Nepali devotees who were travelling to Vaisno Devi temple have been quarantined at Katra of India. The Indian Police have been kept the devotees in high supervision since three days. The devotees had left for their religious tour to Vaisno Devi on March 7 from Kalaiya, Birgunj.

Shrawan Rayamajhi, one among the travelers said that the Police held them from Katra Railway station of Jammu, Kashmir. "As soon as we got off the train, the Indian Police held us," another Nepali, Hridayanath Karna said. "Constant health check-ups are being conducted upon us since three days."

"In presence of the police personnel, a team of doctors

check our body temperature, blood pressure and cough two times in a day," he said. "Although the police have not misbehaved with us, we are told that we will be out from the quarantine only after 14 days," said Karna while talking to our correspondent on mobile phone. Rayamajhi said, "Even though we have been kept in a well facilitated quarantine, we have been facing difficulties as we aren't allowed to get out of the quarantine."

Bharat Raj Poudel, Spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that he wasn't informed about the issue. "It is not safe to travel anywhere during the outbreak of pandemic virus, unless it is urgent," said Poudel. "It is a matter of course to be kept in quarantine during the global emergency."