

MESSAGE FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO ALL BHUTANESE LIVING ABROAD

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Royal Government of Bhutan



The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is now affecting the whole world. Many countries and territories have taken sudden and extraordinary measures like lockdowns, curfews and travel bans to prevent the spread of the contagion. Such measures have and will affect Bhutanese living abroad, such as difficulty in flying back to Bhutan among many other inconveniences.

During such a difficult time, the Address by His Majesty The King to the nation through BBS on 22 March 2020 has deeply encouraged and reassured every Bhutanese of the support and assistance of the Government. His Majesty stated that the most important priority is the health and safety of every Bhutanese citizen. His Majesty assured all Bhutanese living abroad not to worry and that the Government will provide all possible help.

The Government is assessing developments globally on a real time basis in order to provide the best advice and course of action to all Bhutanese living abroad. Sharing of relevant information at the present time is extremely crucial. Therefore, in view of the extraordinary circumstances we are faced with, Bhutanese living abroad are requested to take note of the following:

1. As the situation in many countries is serious, please strictly follow all safety precautions, measures and guidelines put in place by the concerned host Governments. Please be extremely cautious if you are living in high risk areas.
2. Register yourself with the nearest Bhutanese Embassy, Mission, Consulate and Honorary Consul whose contact details are provided below. You can also register through the links available on our website: www.mfa.gov.bt.
3. Contact the nearest Bhutanese Embassy, Mission, Consulate and Honorary Consul in the event you are faced with any serious issues. They have been directed by the Government to render whatever assistance they can provide within their capacities to all Bhutanese under their respective jurisdictions.

4. In view of visa and travel restrictions imposed by countries in South and Southeast Asia, getting flight connections from cities where Drukair and Bhutan Airlines operate will be extremely difficult from 23 March 2020 onwards. Therefore, until these countries lift their travel restrictions, there will be limited flights operating into Bhutan by Drukair or Bhutan Airlines. We are hopeful that the spread of COVID-19 abates and these travel restrictions will be lifted soon. Full details of the travel advice and restrictions by each country, and contact details of MFA Officials are regularly updated and posted on our website and Facebook page.
5. For Bhutanese students abroad, whose universities will remain closed for an extended period, you are likely to face problems with accommodation. We request you to make other arrangements together with other Bhutanese students in the same university or same city, or seek the assistance of the university authorities for temporary arrangements. If these avenues are not available, contact the nearest Bhutanese Embassy, Mission, Consulate or Honorary Consul to work out other possible alternative arrangements.
6. If you fall sick and show symptoms of COVID-19, please get yourself tested to confirm. If it is confirmed that you have contracted COVID-19, please visit a hospital immediately to seek medical treatment. Please keep the nearest Bhutanese diplomatic Mission informed so that they can regularly monitor your condition.
7. As soon as travel restrictions of countries in South and Southeast Asia are lifted and the situation is conducive for travel including through transit countries and airports, we will provide up to date travel advice if you wish to return home. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Missions abroad stand ready to coordinate and facilitate the travel back to Bhutan of every Bhutanese if he or she wishes and when circumstances permit.
8. Before and while travelling, you are advised to read and prepare yourself accordingly as per the restrictions and conditions put in place by each country to ensure safe and unhindered passage. Let me, once again, remind everyone to visit our website, which is regularly updated for the latest travel advisories.

We would like to reiterate that all your fellow Bhutanese citizens back home are deeply concerned about your health, safety and wellbeing, and you are constantly in our prayers. We are confident that with our collective efforts and prayers, the spread of infection by COVID-19 all over the world will stop and we will be able to overcome the current challenges we are facing. Till then, we would like to emphasize the need for each one of you to exercise extreme caution and stay safe and healthy.

With my best wishes for your good health and safety.

Dr. Tandi Dorji
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Thimphu, Bhutan

Link to Bhutanese Embassy, Mission, Consulate and Honorary Consul